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THE CANTERBURY TALES.

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THE
CANTERBURY TALES
OF
CHAUCER.

TO WHICH ARE ADDED,
AN ESSAY ON HIS LANGUAGE AND VERSIFICATION,
AND AN INTRODUCTORY DISCOURSE, TOGETHER WITH
NOTES AND A GLOSSARY.

BY
THOMAS TYRWHITT, F.R.S.

With Memoir and Critical Dissertation,

BY THE
REV. GEORGE GILFILLAN.

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THE LIFE OF GEOFFREY CHAUCER.

GEOFFREY, GEFFREY, or JEFFREY CHAUCER, the Father of English Poetry, and, with the exceptions of Shakspeare and Milton, perhaps the greatest name as yet inscribed on its roll, was born in London, in the year 1328. We learn the former fact from his "Testament of Love," a prose production of his, where he speaks of himself as a Londoner, and of London as the place of his "kindly engendrure;" and the second from the inscription on his tombstone, which intimates that he died in 1400, at the age of seventy-two. Others have maintained that he was born in Oxfordshire or Berkshire. But surely we may lay it down as an axiom that a man seldom is mistaken about the place of his own birth; unless, indeed, we may suppose, as one of his editors asserts, that he lived till 1440, and had perhaps fallen into dotage! The year in which he was born was the second of the reign of Edward III.; and he appeared on the stage of time four years after the birth of his great contemporary, John Wickliffe. It has been truly remarked, in reference to the obscurity which hangs around all the history of Chaucer, that "considering the figure he made in the world during his lifetime, not only in a literary, but also in a political point of view, and the rank and station he had held in society, it seems perfectly astonishing, in this biographic age, that so few particulars of his personal history should have been handed down to us; that even the date and place of his birth should have no positive record." Well does this writer call the present a biographic age. Memoirs are now written of almost everybody, either by others

or by themselves; and there is hardly a scribbler so small but has at any rate materials for his future life lying beside him in formidable quantity. What a contrast in this point between our period and that of this great old poet, of whom we know so little, and that little very uncertainly! It has been alternately conjectured and dogmatically maintained that he was the son of an illustrious knight—of a London merchant—of a country gentleman—and of a common vintner or tavern-keeper. Leland says he was *nobili loco natus*; but Speght, an early biographer of his, adduces his arms to shew that he was not descended from any great house; nay, maintains that his father, a tavern-keeper, left his property, when he died in 1348, to the church of St Mary Aldermary, where he was buried. Stowe adds confirmation to this statement, saying that “Richard Chaucer, vintner, gave to that church his tenement and *tavern*, with the appurtenance, in the Royal Streete, the corner of Herion Lane, and was buried there in 1348.” There is no proof, however, that Richard was the father of our poet. Some have alleged the meaning of his name in French—*Chaucier*, a shoemaker—as an evidence of his low origin; but the occurrence of the name Chaucer in several records, from the time of William the Conqueror to that of Edward I., seems to prove the contrary. The circumstance that he was a Londoner, to which he himself testifies twice in his “Testament of Love,” proves nothing in the question, since, in his age, the city was the residence not only of the trading classes, but of the nobility, and often of the court. It is more probable, however, from the fact that, after his connexion with the royal household, he was called by the honourable titles of *Valetus noster* (our Yeoman), and *Scutifer noster* (our Esquire)—titles which were then never conferred upon individuals of plebeian family—that he was of “*gentle blood*,” and a respectable family.

Some will have it that he attended both the universities of Cambridge and Oxford—a practice then not uncommon. That he studied at the former is evident from his poem, “The Court of Love,” written when he was eighteen, and where he says—

“Philogenet I called am, far and near,
Of Cambridge clerk.”

It may be gathered, too, from the familiarity he discovers with

the scenery around Cambridge, in "The Canterbury Tales;" as where he says—

"At Trompington, not far from Cantabridge,
There go'th a brook, and over that a bridge,
Upon the whiche brook there stood a mill."

For his residence in Oxford there is no proof, save the fact that his contemporaries, Gower, Strode, and Occleve, studied at Merton Hall in that university; and a floating tradition, given by Wood, that when "Wickliffe was guardian or warden of Canterbury College, he had to his pupil the famous poet, Jeffrey Chaucer, (father of Thomas Chaucer, of Ewelme, in Oxfordshire, Esq.,) who, following the footsteps of his master, reflected much upon the corruptions of the clergy." Wickliffe entered Oxford in 1340, but whether he became acquainted with Chaucer there is uncertain. A quarterly reviewer, taking for granted that they were there together, thus pleasantly pictures their supposed intercourse:—"In 1348-49, let us picture Wickliffe, a man not more than twenty-five years of age, but with the face of a hard student, and of an earnest, anxious temperament; and Chaucer, a fair-complexioned youth of twenty-one, of genial, all-enjoying disposition, but of modest and diffident manners; a diligent student, too, but more diffuse in his tastes, and with less intensity and strictness of moral feeling than Wickliffe—reading the Scriptures with the literary fervour of a poet, not with the docility of a man of God searching after the truth; regarding the world with that clear, sunny spirit which reflects what it sees, rather than with the severe scrutinising eye of a moral teacher groaning over social wrongs. To Chaucer, Wickliffe, we can suppose, would be a strange, almost mysterious man, whose grave, acute, and powerful mind bespoke him the able, honest, and truly consecrated priest. To Wickliffe, Chaucer would be a fresh-hearted and ingenuous youth, whose somewhat quaint and original remarks, as well as the reputed extent of his acquirements, would awaken a stronger feeling of interest than might be thought at all times due to a mere writer of love verses."

Whether he studied at two universities or not, he certainly bore no resemblance to the sapient personage, who, boasting of having done the same, was reminded by another of a calf which

had sucked two cows, and the more he sucked the bigger calf he became. Chaucer profited much by his tuition. His writings prove him an adept in all the learning of the day—its philosophy, poetry, and languages. Leland says he was “*acutus dialecticus, dulcis rhetor, lepidus poeta, gravis philosophus, ingeniosus mathematicus, denique sanctus theologus* ;” in other words, a first-rate logician, rhetorician, poet, philosopher, mathematician, and theologian. Some may be disposed to say, incredulously, like Johnson in reference to a similar claim to universal attainments, “Pretty well, Sir, for one man !” But let us remember that that one man in this case was Chaucer. We are often sceptical of such encyclopædiac pretensions, and disposed to say with Emerson, who, when we were speaking of the report that Elihu Burritt was acquainted with fifty languages, replied, “I wish I *knew one* ;” but we can believe almost anything of a mind so clear and capacious, so full at once of common-sense, shrewd understanding, fire and fancy, as appertained to the author of “The Canterbury Tales.” It is not likely that the age of puberty was reached without some impings of his young muse, in praise of love and beauty. In these he is said to have been encouraged by Gower ; but some find grounds for believing that his acquaintance with that poet was of a later date.

After leaving the university, there is a blank for a season in Chaucer’s history ; but even as

“Geographers on pathless downs
Place elephants in place of towns ;”

so conjecture has been loud where information is silent, and sent him away, as Milton went after him, on a continental tour. In this, according to tradition, he visited France and the Netherlands ; and when he returned, in 1355, he commenced, in the Middle Temple, the study of the municipal law—a subject not the most congenial to the temperament of a poet. Indeed, the evidence that he ever attended the Temple is very slender, the story depending on a dateless record, said by Speght to have been seen by one Buckley, where Geoffrey Chaucer, residing in the Inner Temple, was fined “two shillings for beating a Franciscane

frier in Fleet St." Leland talks of his frequenting the law colleges after and before his travels in France; but his authority is rather apocryphal, and damaged by his own inconsistencies; and Tyrwhitt doubts whether in the earlier part of his life he was in France at all.

It is in the Court that Chaucer at last emerges from obscurity, and becomes a real, visible, intelligible figure on the page of history. He was born and reared in a very stirring and eventful period. Edward III. had in 1329, when only fourteen years of age, been proclaimed king, under a council of regency, while his mother's paramour, Mortimer, possessed the principal power in the state. His pride and oppression were felt so intolerable that in 1331, a formidable confederacy was formed against him, at the head of which was Edward himself, now eighteen years of age. Mortimer was seized and hanged, and the queen was shut up, with a reduced allowance and no authority, in her own house. The young king now bent his eagle eye northward, desiring partly, perhaps, to avenge Bannockburn—which stuck as much in the throats of the English then as Waterloo does in those of the French now—and partly to set aside David Bruce, a minor, and to give the Scottish crown to Baliol. He defeated Douglas the regent, at the famous battle of Halidon Hill, July 1333; and it is hard to say how far he might have pushed his conquest, had not a more glittering prize presented itself to his eye, across the Channel. Edward was induced to aspire to the crown of France, which by the Salique law had devolved to Philip de Valois, cousin-german to the deceased King Charles the Fair. He founded his claim on the fact that his mother was Charles's sister. War was proclaimed, and Edward soon took the field at the head of 30,000 men, and accompanied by his son, the illustrious Edward the Black Prince, then only fifteen years of age. Nothing decisive occurred till August 25, 1346, when the battle of Cressy was fought. In this the English were completely victorious, 30,000 foot and 1200 horse of the French army being left dead upon the field. Edward, who had knighted his son the previous year, generously left him the principal management of the fight, to "shew that he merited his spurs." It was upon this occasion, that the younger Edward assumed the motto

of *Ich dien* (I serve) used by all succeeding Princes of Wales, and derived, some say, from the crest of the king of Bohemia, whom the Black Prince slew in the battle. In a few years after, a truce having existed for some time between England and France, Edward again invaded the latter country, but was recalled home by tidings as to the predatory doings of the Scots, whose king, David Bruce, had been made prisoner in a battle at Durham by Earl Percy. Meanwhile, the Black Prince had penetrated from Guienne to the heart of France, where he was met by King John, at the head of a force five times more numerous than the English. The result was the battle of Poitiers, September 19, 1356, in which the French were totally and very rapidly routed, and their king taken prisoner. Sixty thousand were scattered almost without a blow, by the valour and discipline of twelve thousand.

We need not further pursue the current of these well-known historical facts. We have alluded to them only to shew in what a remarkable age—an age full of all the elements of romantic gallantry and chivalric adventure—Chaucer flourished. When he appeared in the court of England, it was probably the gayest and noblest in Europe. Tournaments and pageants were the order of almost every day. Processions were got up, in which ladies of the first rank were seen riding on palfreys, and dragging knights captive through the streets in golden chains. Amidst the glittering throng, there appeared many remarkable persons: Edward himself, still in the flower of life, the conqueror of France, the humbler of Scotland, and who had the kings of both countries in prison; his queen, Philippa, a woman who combined the courage of an Amazon with the mildness of a Madonna, who had raised the army which gained the battle of Durham, and had gone over to Calais, to beg from her husband the lives of Eustache de St Pierre and five other citizens, whom Edward, enraged by the length of the siege, had designed to put to death; the children of the blood-royal, eleven in number, seven being princes and four princesses, including the brave Black Prince, at whose name all France grew pale, and John of Gaunt, now a quiet youth of eighteen, but afterwards to become “time-honour’d Lancaster,” the parent of a long family of kings. It

is in the midst of such a splendid concourse, that we first catch a lively glimpse of our poet. He is about thirty years of age, two years older than the Black Prince; he is handsome in figure, with a fair yet colourless complexion; his beard resembles that of a "wheat stalk," and is forked in shape; his hair is rather short and thin for his years, and of a slightly shadowed yellow; his forehead is fair and smooth as a summer's lake; the expression of his countenance is sweet and gentle, although a minute observer may spy in it, at the corner of his mouth, satire lurking in the shape of a curved smile; his manner is reserved and modest, and he has the habit of constantly looking on the ground "as if," says the Host, in the prologue to Sir Topas, "he expected to find a hare,"—an attitude not all unlike that worn by the great Poet of the Lakes, whose genius brooded o'er the earth "whence he was taken," under a resistless force and fascination, like a needle attracted to a sunken loadstone. Chaucer became corpulent, and no doubt gray or bald, in his latter days, but his general appearance and his demeanour did not otherwise materially change. His aspect answered—like that of most of our great Anglo-Saxon men of genius, such as Spenser, Bunyan, Scott, Wilson, &c., men who had no *foreign* element in their nature—to the ideal of the Saxon style of manly beauty, which includes yellow or auburn hair, bright eyes, and fair or ruddy complexion.

It seems likely, that Chaucer entered the court originally as king's page, but the first intimation of an authentic kind, as to his position there, is one hinted at a little above. There is a patent recorded in Rymer dated 41 Edward III., by which that king bestows on the poet an annuity of twenty marks, (about £200 of our money,) as *Valetus noster*, "our yeoman," and this was granted when he was thirty-nine years of age. He was afterwards created *Valetus hospitii*, "gentleman of the palace," and also *Scutifer noster*, "our esquire." Ere this date, 1367, he had distinguished himself as a poet, having published before then his "Court of Love," the "Assemblee of Foules," the "Complaint of the Blacke Knight," and the translation of the "Roman de la Rose." By and by, the king appointed him Comptroller of the Customs of Wool, giving him, moreover, the strange injunction

that the "said Geffrey write with his own hands, his rolls, touching the said office, in his own proper person, and not by his substitute." The office may seem uncongenial to a poetic temperament, and yet the facts that Charles Lamb perpended "John Woodville" in the old South Sea House, and Macaulay wrote his "Lays of Ancient Rome" in the War-Office, are not so remarkable as the fact which Tyrwhitt affirms, that, occupied in Custom-house accounts, and as it were "buried in woollen," Chaucer composed his "House of Fame."

Long previous to these offices and honours, our poet had been attached to the person of the renowned John of Gaunt, and his connexion with him had, apart from his direct court favour, a considerable share in advancing his fortunes. This young prince, who was ambitious of political influence, and who hated the clergy for their monopoly of power, is supposed to have seen the importance of pressing Chaucer, a genius and a satirist, into his service. Some say that Gaunt, being in love with the Lady Blanche, daughter of Henry, Duke of Lancaster, made the poet his confidant, and that, acting on his suggestion, Chaucer wrote the "Complaint of the Blacke Knight" to aid him in his suit. Whether it was to the "Black Knight," or to his "Minstrel," or to both, we cannot tell, but, certainly, the obdurate fair surrendered, and in 1359, on occasion of the marriage of Gaunt with Lady Blanche, a poem appeared entitled "Chaucer's Dream." In this copy of epithalamic verses, however, another heroine besides Blanche comes into view. This is Philippa Pyckard (or Pickard) Rouet, younger daughter of Sir Payne Rouet, Guienne king-at-arms, a native of Hainault. She (named probably after Queen Philippa) had, along with her sister Catherine, come to England in the train of that royal personage. At court Chaucer had seen her, and was instantly fascinated. She became the object as well as the inspirer of his "Dream," and occupies the foreground in that ingenious poem. The poet imagines that "he" and "his lady" are brought by the young couple, Gaunt and Blanche, to the parish church, "there to conclude the marriage." The service is "full-ysungen out after the custom and the guise of Holy Church's ordinance." The feast has commenced, a thousand twangling instruments of

music are in the ear of the dreamer, when, alas! he awakes, and "behold it is a dream."

"Then from my bed anon I leapt,
Weening to have been at the feast;
But when I woke all was yceased;
For there n'as lady ne creature,
Save on the walls old portraiture
Of horsemen, hawkes, and of hounds,
And hart-deer all full of wounds,
Some like bitten, some hurt with shot,
And as my dream seem'd what was not.
And when I woke and knew the truth,
An' ye had seen, of very ruth
I trow ye would have wept a week."

To this lady, Chaucer was not married for some years. Her sister, Catherine Swinford, (widow of Sir John Swinford,) became first the mistress, and afterwards the third wife of John of Gaunt. In 1359, Chaucer accompanied Edward III. in his expedition to France; an expedition in which, at first, the English king carried all before him, desolating the provinces of Picardy and Champagne, but subsequently underwent some reverses, and was glad to conclude a peace in May 1360. In the course of this campaign, at the siege of Retters, our poet was taken prisoner, and is supposed to have remained in durance for several years. A prison has not unfrequently been a nursery for genius. Sir Walter Scott says, somewhere, that if he were shut up in solitary confinement without books, and with no prospect of speedy release, he would go mad. Many men of genius, however, and brave spirits of various sorts, have found it otherwise. A prison has concentrated their thoughts, and become the "procreant cradle" to their imaginations. The process by which Godwin describes Caleb Williams becoming reconciled to his dungeon, has sometimes been realised in fact. Caleb says—"I tasked the stores of my memory and my powers of invention; I amused myself with recollecting the history of my life. By degrees I quitted my own story, and employed myself in imaginary adventures. I figured to myself every situation in which I could be placed, and conceived the conduct to be observed in each. At length I proceeded to as regular a disposition of my

time as the man in his study who passes from mathematics to poetry, and from poetry to the law of nations, in the different parts of the same day. I went over, by the assistance of memory alone, a considerable part of Euclid during my confinement, and revived, day after day, the series of facts and incidents in some of the most celebrated historians. I became myself a poet, and while I described the sentiments cherished by the view of natural objects, recorded the characters and passions of men, and partook with a burning zeal in the generosity of their determinations, I eluded the squalid solitude of my dungeon, and wandered in idea through all the varieties of human society. While thus employed, I reflected with exultation upon the degree in which man is independent of the smiles and frowns of fortune. I was beyond her reach, for I could fall no lower. To an ordinary eye I might seem destitute and miserable, but in reality I wanted for nothing. My fare was coarse, but I was in health. My dungeon was noisome, but I felt no inconvenience."

This was better than toying with a mouse like Baron Trenck, or exclaiming with Bonnivard in Chillon—

"Of spiders I acquaintance made,
And watch'd them at their sullen trade."

But it was not better than James I. of Scotland, when immured in Windsor Castle, writing, or at least collecting the materials of his "King's Quhair;" than Tasso "making to him wings with which to fly" from the hospital of St Anne, where he was injuriously confined, to the summits of the delectable mountains of poetry; than Sir Walter Raleigh soaring from the Tower to Ararat, to Lebanon, to the Seven Hills of Rome, while producing his great "History of the World;" or than Bunyan dreaming his wondrous Pilgrim's Progress in the damp dungeon at Bedford—his body bound, while his soul was travelling to and back again from that city which hath no need of the sun. The supposed case of Caleb Williams illustrates principally the force of dauntless resolution, blended with contemptuous defiance of the world; the real story of Bunyan displays the power of piety and of faith, as well as of uncontrollable genius.

How Chaucer employed himself in his immurement, we know not, but we are certain that his mind was not idle. He had the

memory of stirring deeds and incidents in the past to cheer him. He had—if not the “key called Promise in his bosom, able to open every lock in Doubting Castle”—the Philosopher’s Stone of genius in his brain, able to convert his chains into gold and his prison into a palace. Above all, he had a pure and hopeful love in his heart, a beautiful ideal, which, like the apparition of Lady Jane Beaufort to James I., made a sunshine in his shady place, and every night on his pillow renewed “Chaucer’s Dream.” In the year 1365 or 1366 we find him in England, married to his own Philippa. On the 12th of September 1366, there is an entry of a pension of ten marks for life, granted by the king to “Philippa Chaucer as a lady in the king’s household,” and this, with the twenty marks mentioned above as given to Chaucer himself in 1367, would amount to more than £300; for that age a very comfortable income for a newly married couple. He might now be considered settled in life—he had reached the borders of middle age, he had the object of a long attachment in his bosom, his happiness in short, if not his fame, had culminated; and now therefore was the time for doing justice to his genius. And to the four years succeeding this, the composition of his “Troilus and Cresseide,” the “Legend of Good Women,” and other of his poems, may probably be referred. In the year 1369, Blanche, the wife of John of Gaunt, died, and Chaucer lamented her in a poem entitled “The Book of the Duchess;” in this, doubtless, he was sincere, although her removal, by increasing the power of his sister-in-law, Catherine Swinford, Gaunt’s mistress, unquestionably tended to the poet’s advantage. In 1370, he went abroad on the king’s service, and two years after occurred his memorable mission to Genoa. This journey (unless we suppose with Tyrwhitt that the whole story is a myth) forms quite an epoch in the history of our poet. From Genoa he is said to have proceeded to Padua, and visited Petrarch there. The chief proof of this lies in a casual allusion in “The Canterbury Tales,” where the tale is said to have been

“Learned at Padua, of a worthy clerk—
Francis Petrarch, the laureat poet,
Highte this clerk, whose rhetorike sweet
Illumin’d all Itaille of poetry.”

The tale here spoken of is that of "Patient Grisilde," which Petrarch only translated from Boccaccio. "Why," says Godwin in his *Life of Chaucer*, "did Chaucer choose to confess his obligation for it to Petrarch rather than to Boccaccio, from whose volume Petrarch confessedly translated it? For this very natural reason—because he was eager to commemorate his interview with this venerable patriarch of Italian letters, and to record the pleasure he had reaped from his society." But surely if Chaucer had met Petrarch, he would have hinted of it in other parts of his Works, and in terms less obscure than these. Yet it is a pity to disabuse the world of even one of its delightful delusions, provided there is evidence enough to warrant the conclusion—"It might have been thus." And it is certainly a pleasant thought, that of the two Fathers of Modern Letters,—the one in the prime of life, the other in its decline—the one being forty-four, and the other sixty-eight years of age—the one the lover of Philippa, the other of Laura—distinguished both by learning, knowledge of affairs, and strong common sense, as well as by genius,—meeting and hailing each other. Previous to Chaucer's visit, Petrarch's glory, like that of a setting sun, was becoming brighter and broader ere its departure. Honours and advantages had been showered upon his old age. The city of Florence had restored his property; he had been received with distinction by Galeazzo Visconti at Milan, and by Charles IV. at Mantua; and his influence had brought about the long-desired return of the papal chair to Rome, under Urban, in 1367. But we doubt not that dearer still to his heart was the unexpected homage of this stranger—

"Born far beyond the mountains, but his blood
Was all meridian, as if never fann'd
By the rough wind that chills the polar flood."

The one had secured his immortality, and nearly finished his course; the other had as yet his *chef d'œuvre* to produce, and twenty-eight years more of life before him. Still they would become friends and brothers in an instant, and, we may conjecture, interchanged gifts—Chaucer giving Petrarch his "*Romaunt of the Rose*" and his "*Troilus*," and Petrarch presenting him with his Sonnets, or perchance with a portion of his unfi-

nished poem, entitled, "Africa," the child of his old age. Their meeting was short, and their parting final. On July 18, in 1374, in the village of Arqua—

"The mountain village where his latter days
Went down the vale of years"—

Petrarch, the "LAUREAT poet," being so in a double sense, having repeatedly had the Laurel on his head, and having *Laura* ever in his heart, was found in his library, with his head resting on a book—dead.

In this year of Petrarch's death, Chaucer returned to England. Such was Edward's gratitude for his services, that, besides the lucrative office of Comptroller of Customs, mentioned before, he gave him the honorary grant of a pitcher of wine daily, which was afterwards commuted into an allowance of money. He became thus the first, and, with the dubious exception of Spenser, is still the greatest of the LAUREATES of England. It is supposed that the service for which he was so liberally rewarded was connected with hiring ships for our navy. Even then, indeed, we got up for the nonce great naval armaments; but having few ships of our own, we were forced to borrow them for a consideration from the free states of Italy or Germany. This year, too, John of Gaunt added to his many favours by bestowing on Chaucer a grant of £10 for life. In the next two years he was equally fortunate, obtaining first the wardship of Sir Edmund Staplegate's heir, for which he received £104, and then the value of some forfeited wool, to the amount of £71, 4s. 6d. His whole income is thought now to have amounted to £1000 (about, some say, £40,000 of our money!) the most enormous sum, surely, that ever belonged to a British poet. In Chaucer's case, however, these splendid rewards befell him, not as a poet, but partly as a politician—an able and astute servant of the court—and partly from his wife's influence, through her sister, with the Gaunt family. Nevertheless, if he did not gain riches for his verses, he spent them like a true poet. He lived in great style and splendour. In 1376 and 1377 he was engaged abroad in diplomatic missions. In the latter of these expeditions he went to France, along with Sir Guichard Dangle and Richard Stan or Surry, to treat of a marriage between Richard, Prince of

Wales, and Mary, a daughter of the French king, as well as to complain of some infringement of the truce between the two nations. Richard, however, was destined for another bride.

As the year 1377 was that in which the persecution of Wickliffe by the papal power began, this seems the proper place for alluding to the career of that great man, and to his connexion with our poet. As early as 1356, this "morning star of the Reformation" had commenced his career by inveighing against the authority of the Pope. Some years after, he became active in opposing the encroachments and ridiculing the pretensions of the mendicant friars. When disputes arose between Edward III. and the court of Rome, in relation to the homage and tribute exacted from King John, Wickliffe, who by this time had become famous in Oxford as a lecturer on theology, and had taken the degree of D.D., stepped forward in defence of the English side of the question, and a reply he produced to a monk who advocated the claims of the Church, procured him the patronage of John of Gaunt. Promotions of various kinds followed, and, flushed by success, he became bolder and bolder, venturing to affix the title Antichrist to the papal brow. This could not be borne, and in the year 1377, Gregory XI. launched three bulls against Wickliffe, condemning his doctrine, ordering his seizure and imprisonment, and requiring the king and government to assist, if needful, in extirpating his heresy. Edward died this year, but the Reformer found an efficient protector in John of Gaunt, who had now become one of the regents of the kingdom during the minority of Richard. Wickliffe, at the citation of the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of London, appeared at St Paul's Church, attended by a prodigious concourse of people, and supported by the Duke of Lancaster and the Earl Marshal. An altercation took place between the bishops and the noblemen, and the meeting broke up in tumult and disorder. The Reformer afterwards attended at Lambeth palace, and delivered to the two prelates a defence of his doctrines. Here, too, he was accompanied and protected by great crowds; and the bishops, overawed, dismissed him without passing a judgment. He was subsequently deserted by Gaunt, and his opinions were condemned by the Parliament. He remained

unmolested, however, personally; and, retiring to his rectory at Lutterworth, continued to preach and executed a translation of the Scriptures into English. He died on the 31st December 1384, sixty years of age. His teachings and his translation of the Bible had a powerful effect at home, and still more abroad. His voice was reverberated from Bohemia by John Huss, and the influence of his writings in Germany may be gathered from the fact that the Council of Constance, years after his death, ordered his bones to be exhumed and burnt, which was done accordingly in 1425. Our readers will remember Thomas Fuller's exquisite account of this act of imbecile and belated bigotry.

"Chaucer," says old Foxe the Martyrologist, "was a right Wicklavian, or else there never was any." This is undoubtedly overstated, but there can be as little doubt that he had strong sympathies with Wickliffe and his cause. To this contributed his early habits of intimacy with the Reformer—the admiration he must have felt for his powers of mind, his learning, his boldness and his moral integrity—his contempt for the clergy and the corruptions of the Papal Church—his intimacy with the John of Gaunt faction—and the rebound he, as well as every noble spirit in Europe, felt against the cold, consolidated, mind-strangling, heart-crushing tyranny of Rome. Chaucer had been repeatedly, too, on the Continent, and in the sentiments of Petrarch, of Boccaccio, and other learned and gifted men, heard the first heavings and cracklings of the ice which were, in less than two centuries, to issue in the glorious spring of the Reformation. He stood to Wickliffe very much in the relation in which Erasmus AT FIRST stood to Luther, and his poems, in their liberal and genial spirit and their satirical exposure of prevailing evils, were a distinct, though less vehement, protest against Popery, and concerted well with the lion-like voice which came forth from the parsonage of Lutterworth.

Yet the true Laureate of the Lollards, as the Wickliffites were soon denominated, was not Chaucer, but one John Ball, called by his enemies a "crazy priest." This man perambulated Middlesex and the adjacent counties, as the orator and poet of the poorer classes of the community—now preaching after mass,

now disputing with the friars, and now setting his revolutionary thoughts to homely, jingling rhymes, such as the famous one—

“When Adam delved and Eve span,
Where was then the gentleman?”

This person, who seemed a kind of caricature of the Hebrew prophets, attained wonderful power and popularity in the land—was counted a public pest by all the conservative classes, but hailed by the populace as an oracle, and the herald of a coming deliverance. For twenty years he thus circulated, according to Walsingham, with whom he is no favourite, “promulgating the perverse crotchets of the perfidious John Wickliffe, and a vast deal besides which it would be tedious to tell of.” It is even said that he organised associations of a political kind among the serfs of Essex and Kent, and distributed among the people little fly-leaves containing strange incendiary matter, couched in inuendoes and figurative language, and where more was meant than met the ear. Such sibylline verses and leaves fluttered out—and truly—the tidings of a terrible convulsion coming on the country.

Amidst this troubled state of things, Edward died and Richard II., not yet twelve years of age, was called to the throne, under the joint-regency of his three uncles, the Dukes of Lancaster, York, and Gloucester. Chaucer, at this time and for some years before, was living in content and splendour at a house granted by the king, near the royal manor at Woodstock, where he was surrounded by every circumstance of distinction and luxury, as well as by scenery of great richness and beauty. There have been since many changes made on the ground, but they still, we believe, point out the poet’s walk; and some old oaks, which must often have shadowed his brow during the noon-day heats, are still waving there. The accession of Richard at first rather added to than diminished Chaucer’s good fortune. His annuity of twenty marks and his comptrollership were confirmed, and in lieu of the daily pitcher of wine, another annuity of twenty marks was conferred on him. But, in common with all the loyal of the land, he was soon startled (1381) by the insurrection, so long brooding, of the serfs under Wat Tyler. This man, a tiler, as his name imports, resenting an insult to his

beautiful daughter by an officer who was collecting the poll-tax, felled him to the ground with one blow. This occurred in Dartford in Kent, and acted as a spark to the inflammable materials in the adjacent regions. A formidable insurrection rose like an exhalation, caused partly by the unextinguished resentment of the Saxons against their Norman conquerors, partly by Lollardism, and partly by a feeling of oppression and physical suffering. Sixty thousand men assembled on Blackheath, and thence proceeded to London, which they occupied without resistance. They demanded the abolition of bondage, the liberty of buying and selling in markets and fairs, a general pardon, and a reduction of the rent of land. The insurrection continued for a fortnight, during which the mob of artisans and "villains" kept possession of London, burnt palaces, and beheaded the Archbishop of Canterbury, and various other persons of eminence. The throne was trembling to its base, and at last the king agreed to hold an interview with Wat Tyler, with a view to make concessions. This took place accordingly in Smithfield, where, however, the Lord Mayor, Walworth, pretending that Tyler seemed about to seize on the king's bridle, struck him down with his mace, some of the servants following up the blow, and killing the prostrate insurgent. The mob instantly lost heart and dispersed. John Ball, with some of the other leaders, and about fifteen hundred of the lower ranks, were hanged.

This revolt was truly a sign of the times, and must have so appeared to all intelligent eyes, including that of our poet. It certified monarchs and bishops that there was such a class as the lower, and that if they had been trampled on like dust, it was the inflammable dust of powder, on which the feet of tyrants were not always to tread softly; it sounded the knell of serfdom or "villainage," and, like a red morning sky, it augured the day of storm, which swiftly succeeded. The outbreak of the "villains" was scarcely over till two parties among the gentry and nobles arose—one the Court party, with De la Pole and De Vere at their head, both great favourites of the king; and another, which might almost be called the Country party, led by the Duke of Gloucester and John of Gaunt. The struggle between them was fierce, attended by various vicissitudes, and was

not finally settled till Richard II., having first exclaimed, if Shakspeare's words be as true as they are exquisite—

“Oh that I were a mockery king of snow,
To melt away before the sun of Bolingbroke!”—

finally dissolved in his beams, and Henry Bolingbroke, son of John of Gaunt, and better known to us as Henry IV., ascended the throne.

Meanwhile, there occurred a somewhat mysterious passage in the history of our poet. Hitherto his course had been almost uniformly successful. The most enviable prizes and golden distinctions had dropped like ripe summer fruit around his path. Rocky difficulties of diplomacy had yielded to his word as to the Open Sesame of Arabian magic. It had been his uniformly, poet and protester though he was, to

“Pursue the triumph and partake the gale.”

He was revelling in wealth. But now, from causes which are obscure, his affairs fell into such confusion that he was obliged to resort to the king's protection to save him from his creditors. Some have said that his pecuniary distresses were pretended. Be this as it may, he fell, for a considerable time about this period of his life, from various causes, under a cloud.

His great friend and patron, the Duke of Lancaster, had loved and supported Wickliffe chiefly because he had warred with the clergy. But when the insurrection of Wat Tyler was imputed to the Wickliffites, the duke is said to have withdrawn his countenance from them, and disclaimed their doctrines. His conduct in this matter, seeming to “palter in a double sense,” did not add to his popularity, and so far injured his *protégé* as well as himself. Still there is evidence that Chaucer, whatever his notions on religious subjects might be, and whether he altered them or not according to circumstances, was faithful to his friends when men sought to blackball them for heresy. In 1384, John Comberton, commonly called John of Northampton, when about to be re-chosen as Mayor of London, was fiercely opposed by the clergy on account of his reforming sentiments. So dreadful was the commotion produced by his re-election, that the court had to employ force to suppress it. Some lives were lost, Comberton

was imprisoned, and Chaucer, who had exerted his utmost influence in his favour, had to fly, first to Hainault, where his matrimonial connexions lived, then to France, and finally to Zealand. He had repeatedly visited the Continent before, but always as an envoy of Majesty; he now reached it as a fugitive and an exile, losing besides his office in the Customs, and, it is said, a seat in Parliament, where he had been elected as knight of the shire for Kent. He carried out with him a considerable supply of money, and liberally shared it with his fellow-sufferers who were fugitives for the same cause. Thus he exhausted his stock, and reaped, as it proved, no gratitude in exchange. His friends patched up their own peace with the English Government—returned home, and then, as the butler with Joseph, remembered not Chaucer their benefactor, but forgot him: they neither tried to procure him a pardon, nor even sent him supplies to aid him while abroad. He contrived, however, to find his way back to England, and was welcomed by a cell in the Tower. Here he was at first treated with great rigour, but ultimately procured release by disclosing all he knew about the political affair in which he had been involved, and offering, too, to substantiate his charges against the accused parties, by entering the lists of combat. He wrote now his "Testament of Love," to express his feelings of grief and indignation at this crisis of his life. He was now at liberty, but deeply disgusted by the treatment he had met—sick seemingly of the world at large; and his wife having died, (1377,) he began to take measures to secure his permanent retreat. He was now sixty years of age, and felt probably the strong impression that his real work as a poet was yet to be achieved. He resolved to dispose of his two pensions or patents of twenty marks each; and in May 1388 he surrendered them in favour of one John Scalby. Some suppose that the same year he retired to his old haunt of Woodstock, and, according to one of his biographers, employed most of his time in revising and correcting his poems and enjoying the calm pleasures of a country life. It is generally thought, too, that in 1389 he commenced his *magnum opus*, "The Canterbury Tales;" and if so, it is certainly not a little remarkable that Chaucer began at sixty-one to write a work which was his noblest title

to fame, and which it was Dryden's task and his immortality to imitate in his Fables when he was seventy.

Nevertheless, (although this only increases our wonder at his powers,) there seems some reason to believe that Chaucer did not retire quite so early to his beloved shades. In 1389, we find him appointed Clerk of the Works at Westminster, and next year he is registered as holding the same office at Windsor. These, however, were only temporary posts, held each of them for about twenty months. For some years after this we hear nothing of him, and now we may conjecture that after his twenty months' clerkship had expired, he retreated, somewhat in a Parthian fashion, to the oaks of Woodstock—like Burke, when about the same age, to those of Beaconsfield—and there collected the *spolia opima* of his genius. We shall in our next paper have occasion to speak of the merits of "The Canterbury Tales;" suffice it at present simply to renew our expression of astonishment how a man in his grand climacteric should be capable of the freshness of fancy, the juvenility of feeling, the racy humour, and the elastic vigour of style which distinguish these productions. Burke wrote his "Regicide Peace," and Godwin his "Cloudesley," later in life still; but the latter is heavy and garrulously prolix, and the former, although in grandeur and depth perhaps the finest of Burke's works, is heavy laden with gloom and despondency. Both are evidently the works of old men, with the powers of manhood entire, but its spirit evaporated; while our poet writes as if still in the lustihood of life, and the

"Breezes blowing in old Chaucer's verse"—

as Alexander Smith finely calls them—are verily, in Gray's language,

"Redolent of joy and youth,
And breathe a second spring."

There are, indeed, here and there, traces in them of a soured and disappointed spirit; but these scars of age, like the rents in a ruin, are almost hid under the rich foliage of his wit and fancy.

It adds to our wonder when we are told that although, in 1394, the king gave him an annuity of £20, yet he was, from that year to 1398, in a state of "sheer, unmistakeable poverty."

So says Sir Harris Nicholas. This is the more surprising, when we know that John of Gaunt, who had been abroad for some time engaged in an attempt to gain the crown of Castile, had now returned to England, and had at length married the poet's sister-in-law—Lady Catherine Swinford, formerly Catherine Rouet, and his mistress. It was thus in age, widowhood, poverty, and desolation that Chaucer wrote his great work—his “Comedy,” as he called it—which he had determined to make the most elaborate production of his pen, and an everlasting trophy of his genius. One is forcibly reminded of the circumstances in which Milton wrote his “Paradise Lost,” and the other poems of his old age. But these, as well as Burke's last writings, are shaded by melancholy, and remind you of the Pyramids or the Sphynx, seen under the wing of a gathering thunder-cloud; whereas Chaucer's work, notwithstanding all its touches of pathos and sublimity, and the occasional bitterness of its sarcasm, is essentially a “Comedy,” a glad and genial transcript of a glad and genial page of human life. It is fabled of a magician in eastern story that he had the power of returning at certain seasons from age to youth, of literally “renewing his youth” when he chose, although not permanently. One could conceive this enviable power to be possessed by Chaucer, and that the music of the wind-stirred oaks of Woodstock, like a wizard melody, transported him to the happy days when he first danced in a courtly revel with Philippa, when he tilted at a tournament with Edward the Black Prince, or when, amidst the golden sunshine and under the blue skies of Italy, he gazed with wondering joy at the furrowed brow and beaming eye of Laura's lover.

Previous to this he had written a learned treatise on the Astrolabe for the use of his son Lewis, who, at the time when it was written, (1391,) was ten years of age. This is the only circumstance about Chaucer's family which his biographers admit to be thoroughly authentic. Some have talked of his having had by his wife a son called Thomas, and other children, but their existence seems exceedingly problematical. The name Thomas Chaucer does indeed often occur in the records of these times; he was Speaker of the House of Commons; but there is little evidence that he was a connexion of the poet. Of the history of Lewis, we

know nothing. Leland, Wood, and Bale, indeed, place him under the tuition of his father's friend, Nicholas Strode, of Merton College, Oxford; but it has been said, "If Wood could trace Strode no further than the year 1370, it is impossible that he could have been the tutor of Chaucer's son in 1391."

About "evening-time" there came a gleam of light upon Chaucer's affairs. In 1398, Richard II. granted to him his "protection for two years." In 1399, he allotted him a pipe of wine annually. And when at last the "mockery king" had melted away before Bolingbroke's young sun, the new monarch, true to his father's example, confirmed to Chaucer the grants of £20 and the pipe of wine, and gave him an additional grant of an annuity of forty marks. Strange to tell, some of his biographers represent him as living at this time in Dunnington Castle, in Berkshire, which it seems he had purchased some short time before, for up to 1394 it was in the possession of Sir Richard Abberbury. How to reconcile the purchase and possession of a castle with "sheer, unmistakeable poverty," and at best the position of a pensionary dependent, nourished on the rinsings of the royal cellar, we cannot tell. Tyrwhitt remarks that the tradition noticed by Evelyn in his "*Sylva*" of an oak in Dunnington Park called Chaucer's oak, may be accounted for without supposing that it was planted by Chaucer himself, as the castle was undoubtedly in the hands of the aforesaid Thomas Chaucer for many years.

Chaucer did not live long after this. And yet when we come to inquire into the causes of his death, we are, as usual, entangled in a mesh of contradictory conjectures. His biographers, having brought him to Dunnington Castle from Woodstock, send him up next on a bootless errand to London. He went there to solicit a continuance of his annuities, but found such difficulties in the way as hastened his end. Certain it is, that on the 24th of December 1399, his name occurs (for the last time in any extant record) in a lease made to him by the Abbot-prior and Convent of Westminster, of a tenement situated in the garden of the chapel, at the yearly rent of 53s. 4d. It is probable that it was in this house, which stood on the site of Henry VII.'s Chapel, that our poet at length died, on the 25th of October 1400, in his seventy-third year.

As to his creed in death, opinion, or rather conjecture, is again divided. Most of his biographers make him die a member of the Church of Rome. John Foxe, as we have seen, claims him as a Wickliffite. Warton, in his Essay on Pope, says that Chaucer as well as Dante held the papal power to be Antichrist, an assertion which Bossuet has tried with great pains to refute. Whether he died Papist or Protestant, his end is believed to have been devout and edifying. Wood, in his Annals, informs us that although he did not repent at the last of his reflections at the clergy, "yet of that he wrote of love and bawdry it grieved him much on his deathbed; for one that lived shortly after his time maketh report that when he saw death approaching, he did often cry out 'Woe is me, woe is me, that I cannot recall and annul those things which I have written of the base and filthy love of men towards women; but alas! they are now continued from man to man, and I cannot do what I desire.'" It is said, too, that he produced the lines, "Gode Counsaile of Chaucer," when on his deathbed, and in great anguish. We quote the last stanza—

"That thee is sent receive in buxomness;
 The wrestling of this world asketh a fall;
 Here is no home, here is but wilderness—
 Forth, pilgrim, forth—beast, out of thy stall.
 Look up on high, and thanke God of all,
 Weive [leave] thy lusts, and let thy ghost thee lede,
 And truth thee shall deliver, it is no drede."

Chaucer was buried in Westminster Abbey, in the south transept aisle, in that part which has since become Poets' Corner. A century and a half had to elapse ere a monument was erected over his ashes. This was done at the expense of one Nicholas Brigham, a gentleman of Oxford, himself a poet, and an enthusiastic admirer of our author. It stands at the north end of a magnificent recess, formed by four obtuse foliaged arches, and is a plain altar, with three quatrefoils, and the same number of shields. The inscription and figures on the back are nearly obliterated. It was fit that Chaucer, the Father of English poetry, should be first of his tribe to lie down in that great gathering-place of the dust of poets.

Chaucer died, as he had lived, amidst unquiet times. Henry IV. had been seated on the throne, and Richard, whom he had supplanted, was dead in prison. But though the wind was down, the sea continued to ride high. In the very year of our poet's death, a plot among the disaffected nobles to remove "ingrate and canker'd Bolingbroke," was discovered just in time to prevent its success, and many executions of men of rank were the result. To ingratiate himself with the clergy, Henry, much against his will, had to surrender the Lollards to the fury and flames of their adversaries. As if to avenge their blood, enemy after enemy now rose against England. First, the Gascons refused submission—although they were speedily subdued by an army. Then Wales was stirred to its deepest valley by the breath of the great Glendower, and, rising, captured Mortimer, Earl of March, the lineal heir to the Crown. The Earl of Northumberland wished to treat for his ransom, but was not permitted by Henry. This and other circumstances connected with the Scotch prisoners taken at the battle of Homildon, by Northumberland and his famous son Hotspur, led to an alienation between them and their king, who was also their kinsman, and whom they had aided in establishing on the throne. Hence arose the formidable coalition—glorified for ever in the pages of Shakspeare—of Owen Glendower, Douglas, and Henry Percy or Hotspur, against the government of Henry—a coalition broken at Shrewsbury on the 21st of July 1403, after a desperate conflict in which the king himself and his son, afterwards the Harry of Agincourt, greatly distinguished themselves. Even after this, continual revolts, wars, and rumours of wars annoyed Henry IV., until at last in the very prime of life, not full forty-six, and having only reigned thirteen years, he breathed his last. His grand desire latterly was to carry his wearied body and sore wounded spirit to Jerusalem, to expire in the warfare of the Cross; but, instead, he died—if we may credit Shakspeare—in a chamber bearing the same name:—

"King Henry. Doth any name particular belong
Unto the chamber where I first did swoon?

Warwick. 'Tis call'd Jerusalem, my noble lord.

King Henry. Laud be to God! even there my life must end.

It hath been prophesied to me many years
I should not die but in Jerusalem :
Which vainly I supposed the Holy Land.
But bear me to that chamber—there I'll lie—
In *that* Jerusalem shall Henry die.”

Of the influence of Chaucer on English poetry we may have occasion to speak in an after paper. There can be no question that his training and history were admirably adapted for rearing him up as the parent of a healthy, hardy literature—a literature abhorrent of morbidity and one-sidedness—courteous and fair to all classes of the community—blending *seria cum jocos*—feeling that the thread of life is a mingled yarn of good and ill together, and that it is not the part of one aspiring to the character of a popular and large-hearted poet, to spin that thread finer or softer than Nature has done. Chaucer, accordingly, was a man of the world as well as a bard; was a courtier most of his life, and yet had evidently mingled much with the people too—having perhaps himself sprung from the ranks, and, at all events, having ate his commons as a poor student at the universities. He had while abroad seen many men, and studied the manners of various nations; he had reached, for that age, an unprecedented stretch of charity, blended with the powers of a “good hater” and a potential reformer. Loyal to his king, respectful to the nobility, and chivalrously gallant to the beauty and fashion of the age, he had yet strong ties uniting him to the Movement Party; and perhaps, but for the foolish conduct of the John Balls and the Wat Tylers, might have taken a more decided stand in its favour.

A curious claim has been put in for Chaucer to a connexion with royalty. An ingenious writer in the *Retrospective Review* thus states it:—“John of Gaunt ultimately (after the death of the Castilian princess his second wife) married Catherine Pickard Rouet, the sister of Chaucer’s wife. This lady, ere her marriage, had born to Gaunt several illegitimate children, from one of whom Henry VII. was descended. And thus did the poet Chaucer, by matrimonial affinity, become allied to the royal family of England, and lived to see, in the person of Henry IV., the son of his brother-in-law seated upon the English throne.

And if the grandeur of posthumous relationship could confer any additional lustre on the memory of superior genius, it might be remarked, that, according to the statements of an elaborate genealogist of the age of Charles I., among those to whom, in the course of descent, this alliance had given collateral affinity to the family of the father of English poetry, there could at that time have been enumerated in succession no less than eight kings, four queens, and five princesses of England; six kings and three queens of Scotland; two cardinals; upwards of twenty dukes, and almost as many duchesses, of England; several dukes of Scotland; besides many potent princes and eminent nobility in foreign parts."

It remains at present only to trace the bibliographical history of Chaucer's poems.

The immortal William Caxton, the father of English printing, as Chaucer of English poetry, in 1474 published the first typographical work ever executed in England,—namely, "The Game and Playe of the Chesse." A year or two later, a MS. copy, very imperfect, however, of "The Canterbury Tales," fell into his hands, and, struck with their fascinating qualities, he gave them his imprimatur. This was in 1475 or 1476. This coming to the knowledge of William Thynne, Esq., who happened to be in possession of a much better MS., he communicated it to Caxton. The printer, six years after the appearance of the first, gave to the public a second, and very much extended and improved edition. A third edition of "The Canterbury Tales," supposed to have been a copy of the second, is believed to have been published in 1495, "collected by William Caxton, and printed by Wynken de Worde, at Westmester;" but this, at any rate, could only have been a copy of Caxton's second edition, as he himself died in 1491 or 1492. There then succeeded two editions by Pynson—the first with no date—the second in 1526; and in this one there appeared a few of the other poems attributed to Chaucer.

"The Canterbury Tales" were devoured with ravenous avidity, and a strong desire for more from the same hand was generally entertained. To gratify this, Mr Thynne carefully superintended a complete edition of all the poems that had then

come to light, and dedicated it to Henry VIII., that "most gracious, virtuous, and of God most elect and worthy prince, in whom of very merite, duty, and succession was renewed the glorious title of Defensor of the Christian Faith;" and who, as the "most excellent, and in all virtues most Protestant prince," was alone deemed deserving to patronise the works of this wonderful disinterred poet.

It is questionable if any copy of this primitive edition of Chaucer's collected works be extant. But Tyrwhitt holds that the edition printed by Thomas Godfrey in 1532, if not the very edition of Thynne, which he believes it is, is assuredly copied from it, and may therefore be regarded in all critical references to be the original edition of the general works of the author. No further additions seem to have been made to this till Stowe and Speght published their successive editions in 1561, 1598 or 1599, and 1602. In these there are some spurious additions, such as "The Cook's Tale," "The Squire's," "The Cook's Second Tale," and "Gamelyn;" but "The Court of Love," "The Flower and the Leaf," and "Chaucer's Dream," are thoroughly worthy of the great name and fame of their author. In the former volume, honourable mention was made of Mr Tyrwhitt's important contributions to the reputation and the understanding of Chaucer, by his admirable edition of "The Canterbury Tales," of which our own may be called almost a reproduction. The plan of our series confines us principally to that work, but in our preliminary essay to the next or third volume, we propose, besides a general estimate of Chaucer's genius, and some critical remarks on his principal work, to give a short analysis of, and a few extracts from, his "Troilus and Cresseide," his "Court of Love," his "Legend of Good Women," his "Flower and the Leaf," his "House of Fame," and one or two other of his less generally known, but characteristic and admirable poems.

CONTENTS.

	PAGE
THE LIFE OF GEOFFREY CHAUCER	v
THE CANTERBURY TALES.	
THE WIFE OF BATH'S PROLOGUE	1
THE WIFE OF BATH'S TALE	27
THE FRIAR'S PROLOGUE	40
THE FRIAR'S TALE	41
THE SOMPNOUR'S PROLOGUE	53
THE SOMPNOUR'S TALE	54
THE CLERK'S PROLOGUE	73
THE CLERK'S TALE	75
THE MERCHANT'S PROLOGUE	115
THE MERCHANT'S TALE	116
THE SQUIRE'S PROLOGUE	151
THE SQUIRE'S TALE	152
THE FRANKLIN'S PROLOGUE	173
THE FRANKLIN'S TALE	175
THE DOCTOR'S PROLOGUE	202
THE DOCTOR'S TALE	202
THE PARDONER'S PROLOGUE	212
THE PARDONER'S TALE	213
THE SHIPMAN'S PROLOGUE	233
THE SHIPMAN'S TALE	234
THE PRIORESS'S PROLOGUE	248
THE PRIORESS'S TALE	249
NOTES	259

THE CANTERBURY TALES.

THE WIFE OF BATH'S PROLOGUE.

EXPERIENCE, though none authority 5583
Were in this world, is right enough for me
To speak of woe that is in marriage:
For, lordings, since I twelve year was of age,
(Thanked be God that is etern on live,)
Husbands at churchē door have I had five,
(If I so often might have wedded be,)
And all were worthy men in their degree. 5590

But me was told, not longē time ago is,
That sithen¹ Christ ne went never but onis ¹ Since.
To wedding, in the Cane* of Galilee,
That by that ilk² ensample taught he me, ² Same.
That I ne shouldē wedded be but ones.
Lo, hearkē eke, what a sharp word for the nones,³ ³ Occasion.
Beside a wellē Jesu, God and man,
Spake in reproof of the Samaritan:
'Thou hast yhaddē five husbands,' said he;
'And thilkē man, that now hath wedded thee, 5600

* 'Cane:' Cana—John ii.

	Is not thine husband:’ thus said he certain; 5601 What that he meant thereby, I cannot sayn. But that I ask, why that the fifthē man Was none husband to the Samaritan? How many might she have in marriage? Yet heard I never tellen in mine age Upon this number definitioun; Men may divine, and glosen ¹ up and down.
¹ Com- ment.	But well I wot, express withouten lie, God bade us for to wax and multiply; 5610 That gentle text can I well understand. Eke well I wot, he said, that mine husband Should leave father and mother, and take to me; But of no number mentioun made he, Of bigamy or of octogamy; Why should men then speak of it villainy?
² Lord.	Lo here the wisē king Dan ² Solomon, I trow he haddē wivēs more than one, (As wouldē God it lawful were to me To be refreshed half so oft as he) 5620 Which ³ a gift of God had he for all his wivēs? No man hath such, that in this world on live is.
³ What sort of.	God wot, this noble king, as to my wit, ⁴ The firstē night had many a merry fit
⁴ Under- standing.	With each of them, so well was him on live. ⁵ Blessed be God that I have wedded five, Welcome the sixthē when that ever he shall. For since I will not keep me chaste in all, When mine husband is from the world ygone, Some Christian man shall wedden me anon. 5630
⁵ In life.	For then the apostle saith that I am free To wed, a’ God’s half, ⁶ where it liketh me. He saith, that to be wedded is no sin; Better is to be wedded than to brinne. ⁷
⁶ On God’s part.	
⁷ Burn.	

What recketh me though folk say villainy	5635	
Of shrewed ¹ Lamech, and his bigamy?		¹ Ill-temp- ered.
I wot well Abraham was an holy man,		
And Jacob eke, as far as ever I can, ²		² Know.
And each of them had wivës more than two,		
And many another holy man also.	5640	
Where can ye see in any manner age		
That highë God defended ³ marriage		³ Forbade.
By éxpress word? I pray you telleth ⁴ me,		⁴ Tell.
Or where commanded he virginity?		
I wot as well as ye, it is no dread, ⁵		⁵ Doubt.
The apostle, when he spake of maidenhead,		
He said, that precept thereof had he none:		
Men may counsél a woman to be one, ⁶		⁶ Remain a maid.
But counselling is no commandement;		
He put it in our owen judgëment.	5650	
For haddë God commanded maidenhead,		
Then had he damned ⁷ wedding out of dread;		⁷ Condem- ned.
And certes, if there were no seed ysow,		
Virginity then whereof should it grow?		
Paul durstë not commanden at the lest ⁸		⁸ Least.
A thing, of which his Master gave no hest. ⁹		⁹ Com- mand.
The dart ¹⁰ is set up for virginity,		¹⁰ Goal.
Catch whoso may, who runneth best let see.		
But this word is not take of every wight,		
But there as God will give it of his might.	5660	
I wot well that the apostle was a maid,		
But nathëless, though that he wrote and said,		
He would that every wight were such as he,		
All n'is but counsel to virginity.		
And for to be a wife he gave me leave,		
Of indulgence, so n'is it no reprove ¹¹		¹¹ Reproof.
To wedden me, if that my makë ¹² die,		¹² Hus- band.

	Without excepti3n of bigamy; All were it good no woman for to touch, (He meant as in his bed or in his couch,) For peril is both fire and tow to assemble; Ye know what this example may resemble. This is all and some, he held virginity	5668
¹ Frailty.	More perfect than wedding in fre3lty: ¹ (Frailty clepe I, but if that he and she Would lead their liv3s all in chastity,) I grant it well, I have of none envy, Who maidenhead prefer to bigamy;	
² Mind.	It liketh them to be clean in body and ghost; ² Of mine estate I will not maken boast.	5680
	For well ye know, a lord in his household Ne hath not every vessel all of gold: Some be of tree; and do their lord servíce.	
³ Calleth.	God clepeth ³ folk to him in sundry wise, And evereach hath of God a proper gift,	
⁴ To divide.	Some this, some that, as that him liketh shift. ⁴ Virginity is great perfecti3n, And continence eke with devoti3n:	
⁵ Fountain.	But Christ, that of perfecti3n is well, ⁵ Ne bade not every wight he should go sell	5690
⁶ Doctrine.	All that he had, and give it to the poor, And in such wise foll3w him and his lore: ⁶ He spake t3 them that would live perfectly, And, lordings, (by your leave,) that am not I; I will bestow the flower of all mine age In th' act3s and the fruit of marri3ge. Tell me also, to what conclusi3n Were members made of generati3n, And of so perfect wise a wight ywrought? Trusteth me well, they were not made for nought. Glose whoso will, and say both up and down,	5701

That they were madë for purgatioun 5702
 Of urine, and of other thingës smale,
 And eke to know a female from a male:
 And for none other causë? say ye no?
 The experiënce wot well it is not so.
 So that the clerkës be not with me wroth,
 I say this, that they makéd¹ be for both,
 This is to say, for office,² and for ease³
 Of engendrure, there we not God displease. 5710
 Why should men ellës in their bookës set,
 That man shall yelden to his wife her debt?
 Now wherewith should he make his payëment,
 If he ne used his silly instrument?
 Then were they made upon a créature
 To purge urine, and eke for engendrure.

But I say not that every wight is hold,
 That hath such harness as I to you told,
 To go and usen them in engendrure;
 Then should men take of chastity no cure.⁴ 5720
 Christ was a maid, and shapen as a man,
 And many a saint, since that this world began,
 Yet lived they ever in perfect chastity.
 I n'ill⁵ envy⁶ with no virginity.
 Let them with bread of pure⁷ wheat be fed,
 And let us wivës eaten barley bread.
 And yet with barley bread, Mark tellen can,
 Our Lord Jesu refreshed many a man.
 In such estate as God hath cleped⁸ us,
 I will perséver, I n'am not precious,⁹ 5730
 In wifehood will I use mine instrument
 As freely as my Maker hath it sent.
 If I be dangerous¹⁰ God give me sorrow,
 Mine husband shall it havë both even and morrow,
 When that him list come forth and pay his debt.

¹ Made.² Duty.³ Pleasure.⁴ Care.⁵ Will not.⁶ Contend.⁷ Purified.⁸ Called.⁹ Nice, or
scrupulous.¹⁰ Sparing,
or difficult.

¹ Hind-
rance.

An husband will I have, I will not let,¹
Which shall be both my debtor and my thrall,
And have his tribulacioun withal
Upon his flesh, while that I am his wife.
I have the power during all my life
Upon his proper body, and not he;
Right thus the apostle told it unto me,
And bade our husbands for to love us well;
All this sentence me liketh every del.²

5736

² Whit.

Up start the Pardoner, and that anon;
'Now, Dame,' quod he, 'by God and by Saint John,
Ye been a noble preacher in this case.
I was about to wed a wife, alas!

³ Suffer.

What? should I bie³ it on my flesh so dear?

⁴ Rather.

Yet had I lever⁴ wed no wife to-year.'⁵

⁵ This year.

5750

'Abide,' quod she, 'my tale is not begun.

Nay, thou shalt drinken of another tun
Ere that I go, shall savour worse than ale.
And when that I have told thee forth my tale
Of tribulacioun in marriage,
Of which I am expert in all mine age,
(This is to say, myself hath been the whip,)
Then may'st thou choosen whether thou wilt sip
Of thilkë tunnë, that I shall abroach.⁵

⁶ Broach.

Beware of it, ere thou too nigh approach.
For I shall tell ensamples more than ten:
Whoso that n'ill beware by other men
By him shall other men corrected be:
These samë wordës writeth Ptolomy,
Read in his Almagest, and take it there.'

5760

'Dame, I would pray you, if your will it were,'
Saidë this Pardoner, 'as ye began,
Tell forth your tale, and spareth for no man,
And teacheth us young men of your practique.'

Gladly, quod she, since that it may you like.
 But that I pray to all this company,
 If that I speak after my fantasy,
 As taketh not a grief¹ of that I say,
 For mine intent is not but for to play.

5771

¹ Not be
offended.

Now, sirs, then will I tell you forth my tale.
 As ever may I drinken wine or ale
 I shall say sooth, the husbands that I had
 As three of them were good, and two were bad.
 The three were goodë men and rich and old.
 Unethes² mighten they the statute hold,
 In which that they were bounden unto me.
 Yet wot well what I mean of this, pardie.
 As God me help, I laugh when that I think,
 How piteously a-night I made them swink,³
 But by my fay, I told of it no store:⁴
 They had me given their land and their treasóre,
 Me needed not do longer diligence
 To win their love, or do them reverence.
 They loved me so well, by God above,
 That I ne told no dainty⁵ of their love.

5780

² With dif-
ficulty.³ Labour.⁴ Held it of
no use.

A wise woman will busy her ever in one⁶
 To gotten their love, there⁷ as she hath none.
 But since I had them wholly in mine hand,
 And that they haddë given me all their land,
 What should I taken keep them for to please,⁸
 But it were for my profit, or mine ease?

5790

⁵ Set no
value on.⁶ Constant-
ly.⁷ As long.⁸ Care.

I set them so a-workë, by my fay,
 That many a night they sangen Wala-wa!
 The bacon was not fet⁹ for them, I trow,
 That some men have in Essex at Dunmow.
 I govern'd them so well after my law,
 That each of them full blissful was and fawe¹⁰
 To bringen me gay thingës from the fair.

5800

⁹ Fetched.¹⁰ Fain.

- They were full gladë when I spake them fair, 5804
¹ Angrily. For God it wot, I chid them spiteously.¹
 Now hearkeneth how I bare me properly.
 ➔ Ye wisë wivës, that can understand,
² Make them be- Thus shall ye speak, and bear them wrong on hand,²
 lie. For half so boldely can there no man
³ Lie. Swearen and lien³ as a woman can. 5810
 (I say not this by wivës that be wise,
 But if it be when they them misadvise.)
 ➔ A wisë wife if that she can⁴ her good,
⁴ Know. Shall bearen them on hand the cow is wood,⁵
⁵ Mad. And taken witness of their owen maid
 Of their assent: but hearkeneth how I said.
 ➔ ‘Sir oldë kaynard,* is this thine array?
 Why is my neighëbourë’s wife so gay?
 She is honour’d over all where she go’th,
 I sit at home, I have no thrifty cloth. 5820
 What dost thou at my neighëbourë’s house?
 Is she so fair? art thou so amorous?
⁶ Whis- What rownest⁶ thou with our maid? *benedicite*,
 est. Sir oldë lecher, let thy japës⁷ be.
⁷ Buffoon-
 eries. ‘And if I have a gossip, or a friend,
 (Withouten guilt,) thou chidest as a fiend,
 If that I walk or play unto his house.
 ‘Thou comest home as drunken as a mouse,
 And preacheest on thy bench, with evil prefe:⁸
⁸ Evil may it prove! Thou sayst to me, it is a great mischief 5830
⁹ Expense. To wed a poorë woman, for costage:⁹
¹⁰ Kindred. And if that she be rich of high parage,¹⁰
 Then sayst thou, that it is a tormentry,
 To suffer her pride and her meláncholy.
 And if that she be fair, thou very knave,
¹¹ Whore- Thou sayst that every holour¹¹ will her have.

* ‘Kaynard:’ a French term of reproach—from ‘canis.’

She may no while in chastity abide,
That is assailed upon every side. 5837

Thou sayst some folk desire us for richës,
Some for our shape, and some for our fairness,
And some, for she can either sing or dance,
And some for gentiless and dalliance,
Some for her handës and her armës smale:
Thus go'th all to the devil by thy tale.

Thou sayst, men may not keep a castle wall,
It may so long assail'd be over all.

And if that she be foul, thou sayst, that she
Coveteth every man that she may see;

For as a spaniel, she will on him leap,

Till she may finden some man her to chepe.¹ 5850

Ne none so grey goose go'th there in the lake,
(As sayst thou) that will be without a make.²

And sayst, it is an hard thing for to weld³

A thing, that no man will, his þankës,⁴ held.

‘Thou sayst thou, lorel,⁵ when thou go'st to bed,

And that no wise man needeth for to wed,

Nor no man that intendeth unto heaven.

With wildë thunder dint and fiery leven⁶

Motë⁷ thy welked⁸ neckë be to-broke.

‘Thou sayst, that dropping houses, and eke smoke,

And chiding wivës maken men to flee 5861

Out of their own house; ah! *benedicite*,

What aileth such an old man for to chide?

‘Thou sayst, we wivës will our vices hide,

Till we be fast, and then we will them shew.

Well may that be a proverb of a shrew.

‘Thou sayst, that oxen, asses, horse, and hounds,

They be assayed⁹ at diversë stounds,¹⁰

Basons, laverës, ere that men them buy,

Spoonës, stoolës, and all such husbandry, 5870

¹ Buy.

² Mate.

³ Govern.

⁴ With his will.

⁵ Good-for-nothing.

⁶ Lightning.

⁷ May.

⁸ Withered.

⁹ Proved.

¹⁰ Seasons.

And so be pottës, clothës, and array, 5871
 But folk of wivës maken none assay,
 Till they be wedded, oldë dotard shrew!
 And then, sayst thou, we will our vices shew.

‘Thou sayst also, that it displeaseth me,
 But if that thou wilt praisen my beauty,
 And but thou pore alway upon my face,
 And clepë¹ me fair dame in every place;
 And but thou make a feast on thilkë² day
 That I was born, and make me fresh and gay; 5880

And but thou do to my norice³ honoúr,
 And to my chamberere⁴ within my bower,
 And to my father’s folk, and mine allies;⁵
 Thus sayst thou, oldë barrel full of lies.

‘And yet also of our prentice Jenkin,
 For his crisp hair, shining as gold so fine,
 And for he squireth me both up and down,
 Yet hast thou caught a false suspesiún:
 I will him not, though thou were dead to-morrow.

‘But tell me this, why hidest thou with sorrow
 The keyës of thy chest away from me? 5891
 It is my good as well as thine, pardie.

What, ween’st⁶ thou make an idiot of our dame?

Now by that lord that cleped is Saint Jame,
 Thou shalt not bothë, though that thou were wood,⁷
 Be master of my body and of my good,

That one thou shalt forego maugre⁸ thine eyen.
 What helpeth it of me to inquire and spyen?

I trow thou wouldest lock me in thy chest.

Thou shouldest say, “Fair wife, go where thee lest;⁹
 Take your disport; I will not ’lieve no tales; 5901
 I know you for a truë wife, Dame Ales.”

‘We love no man, that taketh keep or charge
 Where that we go, we will be at our large.

¹ Call.

² That.

³ Nurse.

⁴ Chamber-
maid.

⁵ Rela-
tions.

⁶ Thinkest.

⁷ Furious.

⁸ Spite of.

⁹ Pleases.

Of allë men yblessed may he be 5905
 The wise astrologer Dan Ptolomy,
 That saith this proverb in his Almagest:
 "Of allë men his wisdom is highést,
 That recketh not who hath the world in hand."

'By this proverb thou shalt well understand, 5910

Have thou enough, what thar¹ thee reck or care ¹ Needs.
 How merrily that other folkës fare?

For certes, oldë dotard, by your leave,
 Ye shallen have queint right enough at eve.

He is too great a niggard that will werne² ² Refuse.

A man to light a candle at his lantern;

He shall have never the lessë light pardie.

Have thou enough, thee thar³ not plainen⁴ thee. ³ Behoves.

'Thou sayst also, if that we make us gay ⁴ Com-plain.

With clothing and with precious array, 5920

That it is peril of our chastity.

And yet, with sorrow, thou enforcest thee,

And sayst these wordës in the apostle's name:

"In habit made with chastity and shame

Ye women shall apparel you," quod he,

"And not in tressed hair, and gay perrie,⁵ ⁵ Precious stones.

As pearlës, nor with gold, nor clothës rich."

'After thy text, ne after thy rubrich

I will not work as muchel as a gnat.

'Thou sayst also, I walk out like a cat; 5930

For whoso wouldë singe the cattë's skin,

Then will the cat well dwellen in her inn;⁶ ⁶ House.

And if the cattë's skin be sleek and gay,

She will not dwellen in house half a day,

But forth she will, ere any day be daw'd,

To shew her skin, and go a caterwaw'd.⁷ ⁷ Cater-wauling.

This is to say, if I be gay, sir shrew,

I will run out, my borel⁸ for to shew. ⁸ Clothing.

	Sir oldē fool, what helpeth thee to spyen ?	5939
	Though thou pray Argus with his hundred eyen	
¹ Body-guard.	To be my wardecorps, ¹ as he can best,	
² Please.	In faith he shall not keep me, but me lest : ²	
³ Make a jest of him.	Yet could I make his beard, ³ so may I the. ⁴	
⁴ Thrive.	‘Thou sayest eke, that there be thingēs three,	
	Which thingēs greatly troublen all this earth,	
⁵ Fourth.	And that no wight ne may endure the ferth : ⁵	
⁶ Pleasant.	O lefe ⁶ sir shrewē, Jesu short ⁷ thy life.	
⁷ Shorten.	‘Yet preacheſt thou, and sayſt, an hateful wife	
	Yreckon’d is for one of these mischances.	
	Be there none other manner reſemblānces	5950
	That ye may liken your parābles to,	
⁸ Those.	But if a ſilly wife be one of tho ? ⁸	
	‘Thou likenest eke woman’s love to hell,	
	To barren land, where water may not dwell.	
	‘Thou likenest it also to wildē fire ;	
	The more it burneth, the more it hath desire	
	To consume every thing, that burnt will be.	
⁹ Destroy.	‘Thou sayest, right as wormēs shend ⁹ a tree,	
	Right so a wife destroyeth her husbond ;	
	This knowen they that be to wivēs bond.’	5960
	Lordings, right thus, as ye have understand,	
¹⁰ Made them be lieve.	Bare I stiffly mine old husbands on hand, ¹⁰	
	That thus they saiden in their drunkenness ;	
	And all was false, but as I took witness	
	On Jenkin, and upon my niece alsó.	
	O Lord, the pain I did them, and the woe,	
	Full guiltēless, by Goddē’s sweetē pine ;	
	For as an horse, I couldē bite and whine ;	
¹¹ Complain.	I couldē plain, ¹¹ and I was in the guilt,	
	Or ellēs oftentime I had been spilt.	5970
¹² Ground.	Whoso first cometh to the mill, first grint ; ¹²	
¹³ Stopped.	I plained first, so was our war ystint. ¹³	

They were full glad to excusen them full blive ¹	5973	¹ Quickly.
Of thing, the which they never aguilt ² their live.		² Sinned.
Of wenches would I bearen them on hand,		
When that for sick ³ unnethes ⁴ might they stand,		³ Sickness.
Yet tickled I his heartē for that he		⁴ Scarcely.
Wend ⁵ that I had of him so great chiertee: ⁶		⁵ Thought.
I swore that all my walking out by night		⁶ Affec-
Was for to espyen wenches that he dight:	5980	tion.
Under that colour had I many a mirth.		
For all such wit is given us in our birth;		
Deceitē, weeping, spinning, God hath given		
To women kindly, ⁷ while that they may liven.		⁷ Natur-
And thus of one thing I may avaunten me,		ally.
At th' end I had the better in each degree,		
By sleight or force, or by some manner thing,		
As by continual murmur or grutching, ⁸		⁸ Com-
Namely a-bed, there hadden they mischance,		planing.
There would I chide, and do them no pleasance:		
I would no longer in the bed abide,	5991	
If that I felt his arm over my side,		
Till he had made his ransom unto me,		
Then would I suffer him to do his nicety. ⁹		⁹ Folly.
And therefore every man this tale I tell,		
Win whoso may, for all is for to sell:		
With empty hand men may no hawkēs lure,		
For winning would I all his lust endure,		
And maken me a feigned appetite,		
And yet in bacon had I never delight:	6000	
That maked ¹⁰ me that ever I would them chide.		¹⁰ Made.
For though the pope had sitten them beside,		
I would not spare them at their owen board,		
For by my truth I quitt ¹¹ them word for word.		¹¹ Requit-
As help me very God omnipotent,		ed.
Though I right now should make my testament,		

	I ne owe them not a word, that it n'is quit, I brought it so abouten by my wit, That they must give it up, as for the best, Or ellës had we never been in rest.	6007
¹ Furious.	For though he looked as a wood ¹ líon, Yet should he fail of his conclusiún.	
² Dear. ³ Care.	Then would I say, 'Now, goodë lefc, ² take keep. ³ How meekly looketh Wilken ourë sheep!	
⁴ Nearer. ⁵ Kiss.	Come ner, ⁴ my spouse, and let me ba ⁵ thy cheek. Ye shouldeñ be all patiént and meek, And have a sweetë spiced conscience, Since ye so preach of Jobë's patience. Suff'reth alway, since ye so well can preach, And but ye do, certáin we shall you teach	6020
	That it is fair to have a wife in peace, One of us two must bowen doubtëless: And since a man is morë reasonable Than woman is, ye musten be suff'rable.	
⁶ Murmur.	What aileth you to grutchen ⁶ thus and groan? Is it for ye would have my queint alone? Why take it all: lo, have it every del.	
⁷ Curse.	Peter, I shrew ⁷ you but ye love it well. For if I wouldë sell my <i>bellë chose</i> , I couldë walk as fresh as is a rose,	6030
	But I will keep it for your owen tooth. Ye be to blame, by God, I say you sooth.'	
	Such manner wordës hadden we on hand. Now will I spoken of my fourth husband.	
	My fourthë husband was a revellóur, This is to say, he had a paramour, And I was young and full of ragerie, ⁸ Stubborn and strong, and jolly as a pie.	
⁸ Wanton- ness.	Then could I dancen to an harpë smale, And sing, ywis, ⁹ as any nightingale,	6040
⁹ Certain- ly.		

When I had drunk a draught of sweetë wine. 6041

Metellius, the foulë churl, the swine,
That with a staff bereft his wife her life
For she drank wine, though I had been his wife,
Ne should he not have daunted me from drink:
And after wine, of Venus most I think.

For all so siker¹ as cold engend'reth hail, ¹ Sure:

A likerous mouth must have a likerous tail.

In woman vinolent² is no defence, ² Full of wine.

This knowen lechers by experience. 6050

But, lord Christ, when that it rememb'reth me

Upon my youth, and on my jollity,

It tickleth me about mine heartë-root,

Unto this day it doth mine heartë boot,³ ³ Help.

That I have had my world as in my time.

But age, alas! that all will envenime,⁴ ⁴ Poison.

Hath me bereft my beauty and my pith:

Let go, farewell; the devil go therewith.

The flour is gone, there n'is no more to tell,

The bran, as I best may, now must I sell; 6060

But yet to be right merry will I fond.⁵ ⁵ Try.

Now forth to tellen of my fourth husbond.

I say, I had in heartë great despite,

That he of any other had delight;

But he was quit,⁶ by God and by Saint Joce:*. ⁶ Requited.

I made him of the samë wood a cross,

Not of my body in no foul mannëre,

But certainly I madë folk such cheer,

That in his owen grease I made him fry

For anger, and for very jealousy. 6070

By God, in earth I was his purgatory,

For which I hope his soulë be in glory.

For, God it wot, he sat full oft and sung,

* 'Saint Joce:' Judocus, a saint of Ponthieu.

When that his shoe full bitterly him wrung. 6074

There was no wight, save God and he, that wist

In many a wise how sore that I him twist.

He died when I came from Jerusalem,

And li'th ygrave¹ under the roodë-beam :²

All³ is his tombë not so curious

As was the sepulchre of him, Darius,

Which that Apelles wrought so subtilly.

It is but waste to bury them preciously.

Let him farewell, God give his soulë rest,

He is now in his grave and in his chest.

Now of my fifthë husband will I tell :

God let his soulë never come in hell.

And yet was he to me the mostë shrew,⁴

That feel I on my ribbës all by rew,⁵

And ever shall, unto mine ending day.

But in our bed he was so fresh and gay,

And therewithal he could so well me glose,⁶

When that he wouldë have my *bellë chose*,

That though he had me bet⁷ on every bone,

He couldë win again my love anon.

I trow, I lovë him the bet,⁸ for he

Was of his love so dangerous⁹ to me.

→ We women have, if that I shall not lie,

In this mattér a quaintë fantasy.

Waitë, what thing we may not lightly have,

Thereafter will we cry all day and crave.

Forbid us thing, and that desiren we ;

Press on us fast, and thenne will we flee.

With danger uttren we all our chaffäre ;¹⁰

Great press at market maketh dearë ware,

And too great cheap is holden at little prise ;

This knoweth every woman that is wise.

My fifthë husband, God his soulë bless,

¹ Buried.

² Cross.

³ Al-
though.

⁴ Ill-tem-
pered.

⁵ In a row.

⁶ Flatter.

⁷ Beaten.

⁸ Better.

Sparing.

¹⁰ Mer-
chan-
dise.

6080

6090

6100

Which that I took for love and no richës, 6108
 He sometime was a clerk of Oxenford,
 And had left school, and went at home at board
 With my gossip, dwelling in ourë town:
 God have her soul, her name was Alisoun.
 She knew my heart and all my privity,
 Bet than our parish priest, so may I the.¹
 To her bewrayed I my counsel all;
 For had my husband pissed on a wall,
 Or done a thing that should have cost his life,
 To her, and to another worthy wife,
 And to my niece, which that I loved well,
 I would have told his counsel every del.² 6120
 And so I did full often, God it wot,
 That made his face full often red and hot
 For very shame, and blamed himself, for he
 Had told to me so great a privity.³

¹ Thrive.² Whit.³ Secret.

And so befell that onës in a Lent,
 (So often times I to my gossip went,
 For ever yet I loved to be gay,
 And for to walk in March, April, and May
 From house to house, to hearken sundry tales,)
 That Jenkin clerk, and my gossip, Dame Ales, 6130
 And I myself, into the fieldës went.
 Mine husband was at London all that Lent; —
 I had the better leisure for to pleie,⁴
 And for to see, and eke for to be seie⁵
 Of lusty folk; what wist I where my grace⁶
 Was shapen for to be, or in what place?
 Therefore made I my visitations
 To vigilies,⁷ and to processions,
 To preachings eke, and to these pilgrimáges,
 To plays of miracles, and marriáges, 6140
 And weared upon my gay scarlet gites.⁸

⁴ Play.⁵ Seen.⁶ Favour.⁷ Festival-
eves.⁸ Gowns.

¹ Apparel.² Fed.³ Whit.⁴ Knowest.

These wormës, nor these mothës, nor these mites

Upon my paraille¹ frett² them never a del,³ 6143

And wost⁴ thou why? for they were used well.

Now will I tellen forth what happed me:

I say, that in the fieldës walked we,

Till truëly we had such dalliance

⁵ Fore-sight.

This clerk and I, that of my purveyance⁵

I spake to him, and said him how that he,

If I were widow, shouldë wedden me. 6150

⁶ Boasting.

For certainly, I say for no bobance,⁶

Yet was I never without purveyance

Of marriage, nor of other thingës eke:

I hold a mouse's wit not worth a leek,

That hath but one hole for to starten to,

⁷ Done.

And if that faillë, then is all ydo.⁷

⁸ Made him believe.

I bare him on hand⁸ he had enchanted me;

(My damë taughtë me that subtilty;) — *no more*

⁹ Dreamed.

And eke I said, I mette⁹ of him all night,

He would have slain me, as I lay upright, 6160

And all my bed was full of very blood;

But yet I hope that ye shall do me good:

For blood betokeneth gold, as me was taught.

And all was false, I dream'd of him right naught,

But as I follow'd aye my damë's lore,

As well of that as of other things more.

But now, sir, let me see, what shall I sayn?

Aha! by God I have my tale again.

When that my fourthë husband was on bier,

¹⁰ Always.

I wept algate¹⁰ and made a sorry chere,¹¹ 6170

¹¹ Countenance.

As wives musten, for it is the usage;

And with my kerchief covered my visage;

¹² Mate.

But, for that I was purvey'd of a make,¹²

¹³ Promise.

I wept but small, and that I undertake.¹³

To church was mine husband borne a-morrow

With neighbours that for him maden sorrow, 6176

And Jenkin, ourë clerk, was one of tho:¹

¹ Those.

As help me God, when that I saw him go

After the bier, methought he had a pair

Of legges and of feet, so clean and fair,

That all my heart I gave unto his hold.

He was, I trow, a twenty winter old,

And I was forty, if I shall say sooth,

But yet I had alway a coltë's tooth. *Young lke*

Gat-toothed² I was, and that became me wele,

² Perhaps
buck-
toothed.

I had the print of Saintë Venus' seal.

As help me God, I was a lusty one,

And fair, and rich, and young, and well begone:³

³ In a good
way.

And truëly, as mine husbands tolden me,

I had the bestë queint that mightë be.

6190

For certes I am all venerian

In feeling, and my heart is martian:⁴

⁴ Under
influence
of Mars.

Venus me gave my lust and likerousness,

And Mars gave me my sturdy hardiness.

Mine ascendent was Taure,* and Mars therein:

Alas, alas, that ever love was sin! —

I followed aye mine inclination

By virtue of my constellation:

That made me that I couldë not withdraw

My chamber of Venus from a good felláw.

6200

Yet have I Martë's mark upon my face,

And also in another privy place. *talk of men*

For God so wisly⁵ be my salvatiön,

⁵ Certainly.

I loved never by no discretión,

But ever followed mine appetite,

All were he shortë, longë, black, or white,

I took no keep, so that he liked me,

How poor he was, ne eke of what degree.

* 'Taure:' The Bull.

	What should I say? but at the monthē's end 6209	
¹ Civil.	This jolly clerk Jenkin, that was so hend, ¹ Hath wedded me with great solemnity, And to him gave I all the land and fee, That ever was me given therebefore: But afterward repented me full sore. He n'oldē ² suffer nothing of my list. ³	
² Would not. ³ Plesure.	By God, he smote me onēs with his fist, For that I rent out of his book a leaf, That of the stroke mine earē wax'd all deaf. Stubborn I was, as is a lioness,	
⁴ Prater.	And of my tongue a very jangleress, ⁴ And walk I would, as I had done befor, From house to house, although he had it sworn: For which he oftentimes wouldē preach, And me of oldē Roman gestēs ⁵ teach.	6220
⁵ Doings.	How he, Sulpitius Gallus, left his wife, And her forsook for term of all his life, Not but for open-headed ⁶ he her say ⁷ Looking out at his door upon a day.	
⁶ Bare-headed. ⁷ Saw.	Another Roman told he me by name, That, for his wife was at a summer game Without his weeting, ⁸ he forsook her eke.	6230
⁸ Knowing.	And then would he upon his Bible seek That ilkē ⁹ proverb of Ecclesiast, Where he commandeth, and forbiddeth fast, Man shall not suffer his wife go roll about.	
⁹ Same.	Then would he say right thus withouten doubt: 'Whoso that buildeth his house all of sallows, ¹⁰ And pricketh his blind horse over the fallows, And suffereth his wife to go seeken hallows, ¹¹ Is worthy to be hanged on the gallows.'	6240
¹⁰ Willows.	But all for nought, I settē not an haw Of his proverbs, ne of his oldē saw;	
¹¹ Holy places.		

Ne I would not of him corrected be. 6243

I hate them that my vices tellen me,
And so do more of us (God wot) than I.
This made him wood¹ with me all utterly;
I n'oldë not forbear² him in no case.

¹ Furious.

² Would
not ab-
stain or
bear.

Now will I say you sooth by Saint Thomas,
Why that I rent out of his book a leaf,
For which he smote me, so that I was deaf. 6250

He had a book, that gladly night and day
For his disport he would it read alway,
He cleped it Valerie, and Theophrast,
And with that book he laugh'd alway full fast.
And eke there was a clerk sometime at Rome,
A cardinal, that hightë Saint Jerome,
That made a book against Jovinian,
Which book was there, and eke Tertullian,
Chrysippus, Trotula, and Heloise,
That was abbessë not far from Paris; 6260

³ Proverbs.

⁴ Jestis.

And eke the Parables³ of Solomon,
Ovidë's Art,* and bourdës⁴ many one;
And allë these were bounden in one volume.
And every night and day was his custume
(When he had leisure and vacation
From other worldly occupation)
To readen in this book of wicked wives.
He knew of them more legends and more lives,
Than be of goodë wivës in the Bible.

For trusteth well, it is an impossibël,
That any clerk will speaken good of wives,
(But if it be of holy saintës' lives)
Ne of none other woman never the mo.
Who painted the lion, telleth⁵ me, who?
By God, if women hadden written stories, 6270

⁵ Tell.

* 'Ovidë's Art:' 'Art of Love.'

As clerkës have, within their oratories, 6276
 They would have writ of men more wickedness,
 Than all the mark of Adam* may redress.

The children of Mercury and of Venus
 Be in their working full contrarious.

Mercury loveth wisdom and sciënce,

¹ Expense. And Venus loveth riot and dispense.¹

And for their diverse disposition,

Each falleth in other's exaltation.

As thus, God wot, Mercury is desolate

In Pisces, where Venus is exaltate,

And Venus falleth where Mercury is raised.

Therefore no woman of no clerk is praised.

The clerk when he is old, and may nought do

Of Venus' workës not worth his old shoe, 6290

Then sitteth he down, and writeth in his dotage,

That women cannot keep their marriage.

But now to purpose, why I toldë thee,

That I was beaten for a book, pardie.

² Our
 goodman.

Upon a night Jenkin, that was our sire,²

Read on his book, as he sat by the fire,

Of Eva first, that for her wickedness

Was all mankindë brought to wretchedness,

For which that Jesus Christ himself was slain,

That bought us with his heartë-blood again. 6300

Lo here express of women may ye find,

That woman was the loss of all mankind.

Then read he me how Samson lost his heres

Sleeping, his leman cut them with her shears,

Through whichë treason lost he both his eyen.

Then read he me, if that I shall not lien,

Of Hercules, and of his Dejanire,

That caused him to set himself a-fire.

* 'Mark of Adam:' all the images of Adam—i. e., all men.

Nothing forgat he the care and the woe,
 That Socrates had with his wivës two;
 How Xantippe cast piss upon his head.
 This silly man sat still, as he were dead,
 He wiped his head, no morë durst he sayn,
 But, 'Ere the thunder stint¹ there cometh rain.'

6309

¹ Straight-way.

Of Phasiphae, that was the queen of Crete,
 For shrewedness² him thought the talë sweet.
 Fy, speak no more (it is a grisly thing)
 Of her horrible lust and her liking.

² Ill-nature.

Of Clytemnestra for her lechery
 That falsely made her husband for to die,
 He read it with full good devotión.

6320

He told me eke, for what ocasiön
 Amphiorax at Thebes lost his life:
 My husband had a legend of his wife
 Eryphile, that for an ouche³ of gold
 Hath privily unto the Greekës told,
 Where that her husband hid him in a place,
 For which he had at Thebes sorry grace.

³ Clasp.

Of Lima told he me, and of Lucie:
 They bothë made their husbands for to die,
 That one for love, that other was for hate.
 Lima her husband on an even late
 Enpoison'd hath, for that she was his foe:
 Lucia likerous loved her husband so,
 That for he should alway upon her think,
 She gave him such a manner⁴ lovë-drink,
 That he was dead ere it were by the morrow:
 And thus alगतës⁵ husbands hadden sorrow,

6330

⁴ Sort.⁵ Always.

Then told he me, how one Latumeus
 Complained to his fellow Arius,
 That in his garden growed such a tree,
 On which he said how that his wivës three

6340

¹ Dear.

Hanged themselves for heartës despitous. 6343

‘O levë¹ brother,’ quod this Arius,
‘Give me a plant of thilkë blessed tree,
And in my garden planted shall it be.’

Of later date of wivës hath he read,
That some have slain their husbands in their bed,
And let their lecher dight them all the night,
While that the corpse lay in the floor upright: 6350
And some have driven nailës in their brain,
While that they slept, and thus they have them
slain:

Some have them given poison in their drink:
He spake more harm than heartë may bethink.

And therewithal he knew of more proverbs,
Than in this world their growen grass or herbs.

² Better.

‘Bet² is (quod he) thine habitation

Be with a lion, or a foul dragon,
Than with a woman using for to chide.’

‘Bet is (quod he) high in the roof abide, 6360
Than with an angry woman down in the house,
They be so wicked and contrarious:

They haten that their husbands loven aye.’

He said, ‘A woman cast her shame away,
When she cast off her smock; and furthermo,
A fairë woman, but she be chaste also,
Is like a gold ring in a sowë’s nose.’

³ Think.

Who couldë ween,³ or who couldë suppose
The woe that in mine heart was, and the pine?

⁴ End.

And when I saw he n’oldë never fine⁴ 6370
To readen on this cursed book all night,

⁵ Plucked.

All suddenly three leavës have I plight⁵
Out of his book, right as he read, and eke
I with my fist so took him on the cheek,
That in our fire he fell backward adown.

And he up start, as doth a wood lioun,
 And with his fist he smote me on the head,
 That on the floor I lay as I were dead.
 And when he saw how stillë that I lay,
 He was aghast, and would have fled away,
 Till at the last out of my swoon I braid,¹
 'Oh, hast thou slain me, falsë thief?' I said,
 'And for my land thus hast thou murder'd
 me?

6376

¹ Woke.

Ere I be dead, yet will I kissen thee.'
 And near he came, and kneeled fair adown,
 And saidë, 'Dearë sister Alisoun,
 As help me God I shall thee never smite:
 That I have done it is thyself to wite,²
 Forgive it me, and that I thee besseek.'
 And yet eftsoons I hit him on the cheek,
 And saidë, 'Thief, thus much am I awreke.³
 Now will I die, I may no longer speak.'

6390

² Blame.³ Avenged.

But at the last, with muchel care and woe
 We fell accorded⁴ by ourselven two:
 He gave me all the bridle in mine hand
 To have the governance of house and land,
 And of his tongue, and of his hand also,
 And made him burn his book anon right tho.⁵

⁴ Agreed.⁵ Then.

And when that I had gotten unto me
 By mast'ry all the sovereignëty,
 And that he said, 'Mine owen truë wife,
 Do as thee list, the term of all thy life,
 Keep thine honóur, and keep eke mine estate;'
 After that day we never had debate.
 God help me so, I was to him as kind,
 As any wife from Denmark unto Ind,
 And also true, and so was he to me:
 I pray to God that sit in majesty

6400

So bless his soulë, for his mercy dear.
Now will I say my tale, if ye will hear.

6409

The Friar laugh'd when he had heard all this:
'Now Dame,' quod he, 'so have I joy and bliss,
This is a long preamble of a tale.'

¹ Speak.

And when the Sompnour heard the Friar gale,¹

² Interpose.

'Lo (quod this Sompnour) Goddë's armës two,
A friar will entermete² him evermo:

Lo, goodë men, a fly and eke a frere
Will fall in every dish and eke mattere.

³ Preamble.

What speakest thou of preambulation?³

What? amble or trot; or peace, or go sit down:

⁴ Hinder-
est.

Thou lettest⁴ our disport in this mattere.'

6421

'Yea, wilt thou so, Sir Sompnour?' quod the
Frere;

'Now by my faith I shall, ere that I go,
Tell of a Sompnour such a tale or two,
That all the folk shall laughen in this place.'

⁵ Curse.

'Now ellës, Friar, I will beshrew⁵ thy face,
(Quod this Sompnour) and I beshrewë me,
But if I tellë talës two or three
Of friars, ere I come to Sidenborne,
That I shall make thine heartë for to mourn:
For well I wot thy patiëce is gone.'

6430

Our Hostë cried, 'Peace, and that anon;'
And saidë, 'Let the woman tell her tale.
Ye fare as folk that drunken be of ale.

Do, Dame, tell forth your tale, and that is best.'

⁶ Please.

'All ready, sir,' quod she, 'right as you lest,⁶
If I have licence of this worthy Frere.'

'Yes, Dame,' quod he, 'tell forth, and I will hear.'

THE WIFE OF BATH'S TALE.

IN oldē dayēs of the king Artour, 6439
 Of which that Britons spoken great honour,
 All was this land fulfill'd of faerie;
 The Elf-queen, with her jolly company,
 Danced full oft in many a greenē mead.
 This was the old opinion as I read;
 I speak of many hundred years ago;
 But now can no man see none elvës mo,
 For now the greatē charity and prayérs
 Of limiters¹ and other holy freres,
 That searchen every land and every stream,
 As thick as motës in the sunnē-beam, 6450
 Blessing halls, chambers, kitchens, and bowers,
 Cities and burghs, castles high and towers,
 Thorpës² and barnës, shepens³ and dairies,
 This maketh that there be no faeries:
 For there⁴ as wont to walken was an elf,
 There walketh now the limiter himself,
 In undermealës⁵ and in morrownings,
 And saith his matins and his holy things,
 As he go'th in his limitatioun,⁶
 Women may now go safely up and down, 6460
 In every bush, and under every tree,
 There is none other incubus but he,
 And he ne will do them no dishonour.

And so befell it, that this king Artour
 Had in his house a lusty bachelor,
 That on a day came riding from rivér:
 And happed, that, alone as she was borne,
 He saw a maiden walking him beforene,

¹ Begging friars.

² Villages.
³ Stables.

⁴ Where.

⁵ Dinner-time.

⁶ Begging district.

- ¹ Spite of. Of which maid he anon, maugre¹ her head, 6469
 By very force bereft her maidenhead:
 For which oppressiön was such clamóur,
 And such pursuit unto the king Artóur,
 That damned was this knight for to be dead
 By course of law, and should have lost his head,
- ² Then. (Paráventure such was the statute tho,²)
 But that the queen and other ladies mo
 So longë prayeden the king of grace,
 Till he his life him granted in the place,
 And gave him to the queen, all at her will
- ³ Execute. To choose whethér she would him save or spill.³ 6480
 The queenë thank'th the king with all her might;
 And after this thus spake she to the knight,
 When that she saw her time upon a day.
 'Thou standest yet (quod she) in such array,
 That of thy life yet hast thou no surety;
 I grant thee life, if thou canst tellen me,
 What thing is it that women most desiren:
 Beware, and keep thy neckë-bone from iron.
 And if thou canst not tell it me anon,
 Yet will I give thee leavë for to gon 6490
- ⁴ Learn. A twelvemonth and a day, to seek and lere⁴
 An answer suffisant⁵ in this mattere.
- ⁵ Satisfac-
⁶ Go. tory. And surety will I have, ere that thou pace,⁶
 Thy body for to yelden in this place.'
- ⁷ Sigheth. Woe was the knight, and sorrowfully he siketh;⁷
 But what? he may not do all as him liketh.
- ⁸ Depart. And at the last he chose him for to wend,⁸
 And come again right at the yearë's end
 With such answér, as God would him purvey:
 And tak'th his leave, and wendeth forth his way.
 He seeketh every house and every place, 6501
 Where as he hopeth for to finden grace,

To learnen what thing women loven most: 6503

But he ne could arriven in no coast,

Where as he mightē find in this mattere

Two créaturēs according in fere.¹

¹ Agreeing
together.

Some saiden, women loven best richéss,

Some saiden honour, some saiden jolliness,

Some rich array, some saiden lust a-bed,

And oft time to be widow and to be wed. 6510

Some saiden, that we be in heart most eased

When that we be yflater'd and ypraised.

He go'th full nigh the sooth, I will not lie;

A man shall win us best with flattery;

And with attendance, and with business

Be we ylimed² bothē more and less.

² Caught.

And some men saiden, that we loven best

For to be free, and do right as us lest,³

³ Please.

And that no man reprove us of our vice,

But say that we be wise, and nothing nice. 6520

For truēly there n'is none of us all,

If any wight will claw us on the gall,⁴

⁴ Fret the
sore.

That we n'ill⁵ kick, for that he saith us sooth:

⁵ Will not.

Assay,⁶ and he shall find it, that so do'th.

⁶ Try.

For be we never so vicious within,

We will be holden wise and clean of sin.

And some saiden, that great delight have we

For to be holden stable and eke secré,

And in one purpose steadfastly to dwell,

And not bewrayen thing that men us tell. 6530

But that tale is not worth a rakē-stele.⁷

⁷ Handle
of a rake.

Pardie, we women kannen nothing hele,⁸

⁸ Conceal.

Witness on Mida; will ye hear the tale?

Ovid, amongēs other thingēs smale,

Said, Mida had under his longē heres

Growing upon his head two ass's ears;

The whichē vice he hid, as he best might, 6537
 Full subtley from every mannē's sight,
 That, save his wife, there wist of it no mo;
 He loved her most, and trusted her also;
 He prayed her, that to no créature
 She n'oldē tellen of his dísfigure.

She swore him, nay, for all the world to win,
 She n'oldē do that villainy, nor sin,
 To make her husband have so foul a name:
 She n'old not tell it for her owen shame.
 But natheless her thoughtē that she did,
 That she so longē should a counsel hide;
 Her thought it swell so sore about her heart,
 That needēly some word her must astart; 6550

¹ Marsh.

Down to a marais¹ fastē by she ran,
 Till she came there, her heartē was a-fire:
 And as a bittern bumbleth² in the mire,
 She laid her mouth unto the water down.

² Make a
humming
noise.

‘Bewray me not, thou water, with thy soun,’
 Quod she, ‘to thee I tell it, and no mo,
 Mine husband hath long ass’s earēs two.
 Now is mine heart all whole, now is it out,
 I might no longer keep it out of doubt.’ 6560

³ Learn.

Here may ye see, though we a time abide,
 Yet out it must, we can no counsel hide.
 The remnant of the tale, if ye will hear,
 Readeth Ovíd, and there ye may it lere.³

This knight, of which my tale is specially,
 When that he saw he might not come thereby,
 (This is to say, what women loven most,)
 Within his breast full sorrowful was his ghost.
 But home he go’th, he mightē not sojourn,
 The day was come, that homeward must he turn.

And in his way, it happen'd him to ride	6571	
In all his care, under a forest side,		
Whereas he saw upon a dancë go		
Of ladies four-and-twenty, and yet mo. ¹		¹ More.
Towárd this ilkë dance he drew full yern, ²		² Eagerly.
In hope that he some wisdom shouldë learn;		
But certainly, ere he came fully there,		
Yvanish'd was this dance, he n'ist not ³ where;		³ Knew not.
No creáture saw he that barë life,		
Save on the green he saw sittíng a wife,	6580	
A fouler wight there may no man devise.		
Again ⁴ this knight this old wife 'gan arise,		⁴ Toward.
And said, 'Sir Knight, here forth ne li'th no way.		
Tell me what that ye seeken by your fay. ⁵		⁵ Faith.
Paraventure it may the better be:		
These oldë folk con ⁶ muchel thing,' quod she.		⁶ Know.
'My levë ⁷ mother,' quod this knight, 'certáin,		⁷ Dear.
I n'am but dead, but-if that I can sayn,		
What thing it is that women most desire:	6589	
Could ye me wiss, ⁸ I would quit well your hire.'		⁸ Instruct.
'Plight me thy truth here in mine hand,' quod she,		
'The nextë thing that I require of thee		
Thou shalt it do, if it be in thy might,		
And I will tell it you ere it be night.'		
'Have here my truthë,' quod the knight, 'I grant.'		
'Thennë,' quod she, 'I dare me well avaunt,		
Thy life is safe, for I will stand thereby,		
Upon my life the queen will say as I:		
Let see, which is the proudest of them all,		
That weareth on a kerchief or a caul,	6600	
That dare say nay of that I shall you teach.		
Let us go forth withouten longer speech.'		

Then rowned she a pistel* in his ear, 6603
And bade him to be glad, and have no fear.

¹Promised. When they been comen to the court, this knight
Said, he had held his day, as he had hight,¹
And ready was his answer, as he said.

Full many a noble wife, and many a maid,
And many a widow, for that they been wise,
(The queen herself sitting as a justice,) 6610
Assembled been, his answer for to hear,
And afterward this knight was bid appear.

To every wight commanded was silénce,
And that the knight should tell in audience,
What thing that worldly women loven best.
This knight ne stood not still, as doth a beast,
But to this question anon answer'd
With manly voice, that all the court it heard,

‘My liegë lady, generally,’ quod he,
‘Women dësiren to have sovereignty, 6620
As well over their husband as their love,
And for to be in mast’ry him above.
This is your most desire, though ye me kill,
Do as you list, I am here at your will.’

In all the court ne was there wife nor maid,
Nor widow, that contráried that he said,
But said, he was worthý to have his life.

And with that word up start this oldë wife,
Which that the knight saw sitting on the green.
‘Mercy,’ quod she, ‘my sovereign lady queen, 6630
Ere that your court depart, as do me right.
I taughtë this answer unto this knight,
For which he plighted me his truthë there,
The firstë thing I would of him requere,
He would it do, if it lay in his might.

* ‘Rowned she a pistel:’ Whispered a short speech or lesson.

Before this court then pray I thee, Sir Knight,
 Quod she, 'that thou me take unto thy wife, 6637
 For well thou wo'st,¹ that I have kept thy life.
 If I say false, say nay upon thy fay.'

¹ Wottest,
 knowest.

This knight answer'd, 'Alas and wala wa !
 I wot right well that such was my behest.²
 For Goddë's love as choose a new request :
 Take all my good, and let my body go.'

² Promise.

'Nay, then,' quod she, 'I shrew³ us bothë two,
 For though that I be oldë, foul, and pore,⁴
 I n'old for all the metal nor the ore,
 That under earth is grave,⁵ or li'th above,
 But if thy wife I were and eke thy love.'

³ Curse.

⁴ Poor.

⁵ Buried.

'My love ?' quod he, 'nay, my damnatiön.
 Alas ! that any of my nation 6650

Should ever so foul disparaged be.'
 But all for nought ; the end is this, that he
 Constrained was, he needës must her wed,
 And tak'th this oldë wife, and go'th to bed.

Now, wouldeñ some men say paráventure,
 That for my negligence I do no cure⁶
 To tellen you the joy and all th' array,
 That at the feastë was that ilkë⁷ day.

⁶ Take no
 pains.

⁷ Same.

To which thing shortly answeren I shall :
 I say there was no joy nor feast at all, 6660
 There n'as⁸ but heaviness and muchel sorrow :
 For privily he wedded her on the morrow ;
 And all day after hid him as an owl,
 So woe was him, his wife looked so foul.

⁸ Was not.

Great was the woe the knight had in his thought
 When he was with his wife a-bed ybrought ;
 He walloweth, and he turneth to and fro.

This oldë wife lay smiling evermo,
 And said, 'O dearë husband, *benedicite*,

¹ Fastidi-
ous.

Fareth every knight thus with his wife as ye ? 6670
Is this the law of king Artóur's house ?

Is every knight of his thus dangerous ?¹

I am your owen love, and eke your wife,
I am she, which that saved hath your life,
And certes yet did I you never unright.
Why fare ye thus with me this firstē night ?
Ye faren like a man had lost his wit.

What is my guilt ? for Goddē's love tell it,
And it shall be amended, if I may.'

'Amended !' quod this knight, 'alas ! nay, nay,
It will not be amended never mo ; 6681

Thou art so loathly, and so old also,
And thereto comen of so low a kind,
That little wonder is though I wallow and wind ;
So wouldē God, mine heartē wouldē brest.'²

² Burst

'Is this,' quod she, 'the cause of your unrest ?'

'Yea, certainly,' quod he, 'no wonder is.'

'Now, Sir,' quod she, 'I could amend all this,
If that me list, ere it were dayēs three,
So well ye mighten bear you unto me.* 6690

'But for ye speaken of such gentleness,
As is descended out of old richness,
That therefore shallen ye be gentlemen ;
Such arrogancē n'is not worth an hen.

³ Open.

'Look who that is most virtuous alway,
Privy and apert,³ and most intendeth aye
To do the gentle deedēs that he can,
And take him for the greatest gentleman.
Christ will⁴ we claim of him our gentleness,
Not of our elders⁵ for their old richness. 6700
For though they gave us all their heritage,

⁴ Wills,
requires.
⁵ Ance-
tors.

* 'So well ye mighten bear you unto me : ' If so be that you could conduct yourself well towards me.

For which we claim to be of high paráge,¹
 Yet may they not bequeathen, for no thing,
 To none of us, their virtuous living,
 That made them gentlemen called to be,
 And bade us follow them in such degree.

6702

¹ Parent-
age.

‘Well can the wisē poet of Florence,
 That hightē Dant’, spoken of this sentence :
 Lo, in such manner rhyme is Dante’s tale.

‘Full seld’ upriseth by his branches smale
 Prowess of man, for God of his goodness
 Wills that we claim of him our gentleness :
 For of our elders may we nothing claim
 But temporal thing, that man may hurt and maim.

6710

‘Eke every wight wot this as well as I,
 If gentleness were planted naturally
 Unto a certain lin’age down the line,
 Privý and apért,² then would they never fine³
 To do of gentleness the fair office,
 They mighten⁴ do no villainy or vice.

6720

² Open.
³ End,
cease.⁴ Would be
able.

‘Take fire, and bear it into the darkest house
 Betwixt this and the mount of Caucasus,
 And let men shut the doorēs, and go thenne,⁵
 Yet will the fire as fairē lie and brenne⁶
 As twenty thousand men might it behold;
 His office natural aye will it hold,
 Up⁷ peril of my life, till that it die.

⁵ Thence.⁶ Burn.⁷ Upon.

‘Here may ye see well, how that gentry⁸
 Is not annexed to possession,
 Since folk ne do their operatiōn
 Alway, as doth the fire, lo, in his kind.
 For God it wot, men may full often find
 A lordē’s son do shame and villainy.

⁸ Gentility.

And he that will have price⁹ of his gentry,
 For¹⁰ he was boren of a gentle house,

6730

⁹ Reward.¹⁰ Because.

And had his elders noble and virtuous,
 And n'ill himselven do no gentle deedës,
 Ne follow his gentle ancestry, that dead is,
 He n'is not gentle, be he duke or earl;
 For villain's sinful deedës make a cherl.¹
 For gentleness n'is but the renomee²
 Of thine ancéstor, for their high bounty,
 Which is a strangë thing to thy persón:
 Thy gentleness cométh from God alone.
 Then cometh our very gentleness of grace;
 It was no thing bequeath'd us with our place.

6736

¹ Churl.² Renown.

‘Thinketh how noble, as saith Valerius,
 Was thilkë³ Tullius Hostilius,
 That out of povert' rose to high nobless.
 Readeth Senec, and readeth eke Boece,
 There shall ye see express, that it no drede⁴ is,
 That he is gentle that doth gentle deedës.

6750

⁴ Doubt.⁵ Dear.

And therefore, leve⁵ husbánd, I thus conclude,
 All be it that mine ancestors were rude,
 Yet may the highë God, and so hope I,
 Granten me grace to liven virtuously:
 Then am I gentle, when that I begin
 To liven virtuously, and waiven⁶ sin

⁶ Forsake.

‘And there as ye of povert' me repreve,
 The highë God, on whom that we believe,
 In wilful povert' chose to lead his life:
 And certes, every man, maiden, or wife,
 May understand, that Jesus heaven king
 Ne would not choose a vicióus living.

6760

‘Glad povert' is an honest thing certain;
 This will Senec and other clerkës sayn.
 Whoso that halt him paid* of his povért',
 I hold him rich, all had he not a shert.

* ‘Halt him paid:’ Holds him satisfied; is content.

He that covéteth is a poorë wight,
 For he would have that is not in his might.
 But he that nought hath, ne coveteth t' have,
 Is rich, although ye hold him but a knave.
 Very povért' is sinnë properly.

6769

‘Juvenal saith of povert' merrily :

The poorë man when he go'th by the way,
 Before the thievës he may sing and play.

Povért' is hateful good ; and, as I guess,
 A full great bringer out of business ;¹

¹ Turmoil.

A great amender eke of sapience

To him, that taketh it in patiënce.

6780

Povert' is this, although it seem elenge,²

² Strange.

Possession that no wight will challénge.

Povert' full often, when a man is low,

Maketh his God and eke himself to know :

Povert' a spectacle is, as thinketh me,

Through which he may his very friendës see.

And, therefore, Sir, since that I you not grieve,

Of my povert' no morë me repreve.

‘Now, Sir, of eld,³ that ye reprovén me :

³ Age.

And certes, Sir, though none authority

6790

Were in no book, ye gentles of honour

Say, that men should an oldë wight hónour,

And clepe⁴ him father, for your gentleness ;

⁴ Call.

And authors shall I finden, as I guess.

‘Now there ye say that I am foul and old,

Then dread ye not to be a cokëwold.

For filth, and eld also, so may I the,⁵

⁵ Thrive.

Be greatë wårdens upon chastity.

But natheless, since I know your delight,

I shall fulfil your worldly appetite.

6800

‘Choose now,’ quod she, ‘one of these thingës tway,

To have me foul and old till that I dey,⁶

⁶ Die.

	And be to you a truë humble wife,	6803
	And never you displease in all my life :	
	Or elles will ye have me young and fair,	
¹ Resort.	And take your aventure of the repair, ¹	
	That shall be to your house because of me,	
	Or in some other place it may well be ?	
	Now choose yourselven whether that you liketh.'	
² Con- siders.	This knight aviseth ² him, and sorë siketh, ³	6810
³ Sigheth.	But at the last he said in this mannere ;	
	‘ My lady and my love, and wife so dear,	
	I put me in your wisë governance,	
	Chooseth yourself which may be most pleasance	
	And most honóur to you and me also,	
⁴ I care not.	I do no force ⁴ the whether of the two :	
	For as you liketh, it sufficeth me.'	
	‘ Then have I got the mastery,' quod she,	
⁵ Pleases.	‘ Since I may choose and govern as me lest.' ⁵	
	‘ Yea certes, wife,' quod he, ‘ I hold it best.'	6820
	‘ Kiss me,' quod she, ‘ we be no longer wroth,	
	For by my truth I will be to you both,	
	This is to say, yea, bothë fair and good.	
⁶ Die.	I pray to God that I may sterven ⁶ wood, ⁷	
⁷ Mad.	But ⁸ I to you be all so good and true,	
⁸ Unless.	As ever was wife, since that the world was new ;	
	And but I be to-morrow as fair to seen,	
	As any lady, emperess, or queen,	
	That is betwixt the East and eke the West,	
	Do with my life and death right as you lest.	6830
	Cast up the curtain, look how that it is.'	
	And when the knight saw verily all this,	
	That she so fair was, and so young thereto,	
⁹ Took.	For joy he hent ⁹ her in his armës two :	
	His heartë bathéd in a bath of bliss,	
¹⁰ In turn.	A thousand times a-row ¹⁰ he 'gan her kiss:	

And she obeyed him in every thing,
That mightē do him pleasance or liking.
And thus they live unto their livēs' end
In perfect joy, and Jesu Christ us send
Husbandēs meek and young, and fresh a-bed,
And grace to overlive them that we wed.

6837

And eke I pray Jesus to short their lives,
Thát will not be govérned by their wives.
And old and angry niggards of dispense,
God send them soon a very pestilence.

} Prayer

THE FRIAR'S PROLOGUE.

6847

THIS worthy limiter, this noble Frere,
 He made alway a manner¹ louring chere²
 Upon the Som'nour, but for honesty³
 No villain's word⁴ as yet to him spake he:
 But at the last he said unto the wife;
 'Damë, (quod he,) God give you right good life,
 Ye have here touched, all so may I the,⁵
 In school matter a full great difficulty.
 Ye have said muchel thing right well, I say:
 But, Dame, here as we riden by the way,
 Us needeth not to speaken but of game,
 And let⁶ authorities, in Goddë's name,
 To preaching, and to school eke of clergy.

6860

 'But if it like unto this company,
 I will you of a Som'nour tell a game;
 Pardie,⁷ ye may well knowën by the name,
 That of a Som'nour may no good be said;
 I pray that none of you be evil apaid;⁸
 A Som'nour is a runner up and down
 With mandements⁹ for fornicatioun,
 And is ybeat at every townë's end.'

 Then spake our Host; 'Ah, Sir, ye should be hend¹⁰
 And courteous, as a man of your estate,

¹ Sort of.
² Look.
³ Good
 manners.
⁴ Low-bred
 word.

⁵ Thrive.

⁶ Leave.

⁷ A petty
 oath.

⁸ Satisfied.

⁹ Man-
 dates,

¹⁰ Civil.

In company we will have no debate :	6870	
Telleth your tale, and let the Som'nour be.'		
'Nay,' quod the Som'nour, 'let him say by me		
What so him list; when it cometh to my lot,		
By God I shall him quiten every groat.		
I shall him tellen what a great honóur		
It is to be a flattering limitour,		
And eke of many another manner ¹ crime,		¹ Sort of.
Which needeth not rehearsen at this time,		
And his office I shall him tell ywis.' ²		² Assured-ly.
Our Hostë answer'd, 'Peace, no more of this.'	6880	
And afterward he said unto the Frere,		
'Tell forth your tale, mine owen master dear.'		

THE FRIAR'S TALE.

Whilom there was dwelling in my country		
An archdeacon, a man of high degree,		
That boldly did executiön,		
In punishing of fornicatiön,		
Of witchecraft, and eke of baudery,		
Of defamation, and avoutery, ³		³ Adultery.
Of churchë-reevës, ⁴ and of testaments,		⁴ Church-wardens.
Of contracts, and of lack of sacraments,	6890	
Of usure, and of simony also ;		
But certes lechers did he greatest woe ;		
They shouldeñ singen, if that they were hent ; ⁵		⁵ Caught.
And smallë tithers weren foul yshent, ⁶		⁶ Damag- ed.
If any person would upon them plain, ⁷		⁷ Com- plain.
There might astert them no pecunial pain.*		
For smallë tithës, and small offering,		

* 'No pecunial pain : ' They were released from no pecuniary trouble.

He made the people piteously to sing ;
 For ere the bishop hent them with his crook
 They weren in the archëdeacon's book ;
 Then had he through his jurisdiction
 Power to do on them correction.

6898

He had a Som'nour ready to his hand,
 A slier boy was none in Engleland ;
 For subtilly he had his espaille,¹
 That taught him well where it might ought avail.
 He couldë spare of lechers one or two,
 To teachen him to four and twenty mo.

¹ Espion-
age.

For though this Som'nour wood² be as an hare,
 To tell his harlotry I will not spare,
 For we be out of their correction,
 They have of us no jurisdiction,
 Ne never shall have, term of all their lives.

² Wild.

6910

‘Peter, so be the women of the stives,’³

³ Stews.

Quod this Som'nour, ‘yput out of our cure.’⁴

⁴ Care.

‘Peace, with mischance and with misaventure,’
 Our Hostë said, ‘and let him tell his tale.

Now telleth forth, and let the Som'nour gale,⁵
 Ne spareth not, mine owen master dear.’

⁵ Whistle.

This falsë thief, this Som'nour, (quod the Frere,)

Had alway baudës ready to his hand,

6921

As any hawk to lure in Engleland,

That told him all the secrets that they knew,

For their acquaintance was not come of new,

They weren his approvers privily.

He took himself a great profit thereby :

His master knew not alway what he wan.

Withouten mandëment,⁶ a lewed⁷ man

⁶ Mandate.⁷ Ignorant.

He couldë summon, up pain of Christë's curse,

And they were inly glad to fill his purse,

6930

And maken him great feastës at the nale.⁸

⁸ Ale-
house.

And right as Judas haddë purses smale¹
 And was a thief, right such a thief was he,
 His master had but half his duëty.

He was (if I shall given him his laud)
 A thief, and eke a Som'nour, and a baud.

6932 ¹ Small.

He had eke wenches at his retinue,
 That whether that Sir Robert or Sir Hugh,
 Or Jack, or Ralph, or whoso that it were
 That lay by them, they told it in his ear.

6940

Thus was the wench and he of one assent;
 And he would fetch a feigned mandement,
 And summon them to the chapter bothë two,
 And pill² the man, and let the wenchë go.

² Rob.

Then would he say, 'Friend, I shall for thy sake

Do³ strike thee out of ourë letters blake;⁴

³ Cause.

Thee thar⁵ no more as in this case travail;

⁴ Black.

I am thy friend there I may thee avail.'

⁵ Behov-
eth.

Certain he knew of briberies many mo,

Than possible is to tell in yearës two:

6950

For in this world n'is doggë for the bow,

That can an hurt deer from an whole yknow,

Bet⁶ than this Som'nour knew a sly lechour,

⁶ Better.

Or an avouter, or a paramour:

And for that was the fruit of all his rent,

Therefore on it he set all his intent.

And so befell, that onës on a day

This Som'nour, waiting ever on his prey,

Rode forth to summon a widow, an old ribibe,*

Feigning a cause, for he would have a bribe.

6960

And happed that he saw before him ride

A gay yeoman under a forest side:

A bow he bare, and arrows bright and keen,

* 'Ribibe:' Musical instrument; supposed to be applied to an old woman on account of its shrillness.

¹ Short
coat.

He had upon a courtepy¹ of green, 6964
An hat upon his head with fringes blake.

² Well
over-
taken.

‘Sir,’ quod this Som’nour, ‘hail, and well atake.’²

³ Shade of
trees.

‘Welcome,’ quod he, ‘and every good fellaw;

Whither ridest thou under this green shaw?’³

Saidē this yeoman; ‘wilt thou far to-day?’

This Som’nour him answér’d, and saidē, ‘Nay.

Here fastē by,’ quod he, ‘is mine intent 6971

To riden, for to raisen up a rent,

That ‘longeth to my lordē’s duety.’

‘Ah! art thou then a bailiff?’ ‘Yea,’ quod he.

(He durstē not for very filth and shame

Say that he was a Som’nour, for the name.)

⁴ Dear.

‘*De par dieux*,’ quod this yeoman, ‘levē⁴ brother,

Thou art a bailiff, and I am another.

I am unknowen, as in this countrý.

Of thine acquaintance I will prayen thee, 6980

And eke of brotherhood, if that thee list.

I have gold and silver lying in my chest;

If that thee hap to come into our shire,

All shall be thine, right as thou wilt desire.’

‘*Grand mercy*,’ quod this Som’nour, ‘by my
faith.’

⁵ Die.

Evereach in other’s hand his truthē lay’t,

For to be swornē brethren till they dey.⁵

In dalliance they riden forth and play.

⁶ Chatter-
ing.

⁷ A bird of
prey.

This Som’nour, which that was as full of jangles,⁶

As full of venom be these wariangles,⁷ 6990

And ever inquiring upon every thing,

‘Brother,’ quod he, ‘where is now your dwelling,

⁸ Seek.

Another day if that I should you seech?’⁸

This yeoman him answér’d in softē speech;

‘Brother,’ quod he, ‘far in the North countrý,

Whereas I hope some time I shall thee see.

Ere we depart I shall thee so well wiss,¹
That of mine house ne shalt thou never miss.'

6997 ¹ Inform.

'Now, brother,' quod this Som'nour, 'I you pray,
Teach me, while that we riden by the way,
(Since that ye be a bailiff as am I,
Some subtilty, and tell me faithfully
In mine office how I may mostë win.

And spareth² not for conscience or for sin,
But, as my brother, tell me how do ye.'

² Spare.

'Now by my truthë, brother mine,' said he,
'As I shall tellen thee a faithful tale.

My wages be full strait and eke full smale ;

My lord is hard to me and dangerous,³

And mine office is full laborious ;

7010 ³ Difficult,
sparing.

And therefore by extortion I live,

Forsooth I take all that men will me give.

Algates⁴ by sleightë or by violence

From year to year I win all my dispense ;

I can no better tellen faithfully.'

⁴ However.

'Now certes,' quod this Som'nour, 'so fare I ;

I sparë not to taken, God it wot,

But if it be too heavy or too hot.

What I may get in counsel privily,

No manner consciënce of that have I.

7020

N'ere⁵ mine extortion, I might not liven,

Ne of such japës⁶ will I not be shriven.⁷

Stomach nor consciencë know I none ;

I shrew⁸ these shriftë-fathers⁹ evereach one.

Well be we met, by God and by Saint Jame.

But, levë brother, tell me then thy name,'

Quod this Som'nour. Right in this meanë while

This yeoman 'gan a little for to smile.

⁵ Were it
not.

⁶ Tricks.

⁷ Confess-
ed.

⁸ Curse.

⁹ Con-
fessors.

'Brother,' quod he, 'wilt thou that I thee tell?

I am a fiend, my dwelling is in hell,

7030

¹ Whether.

And here I ride about my purchasing, 7031
 To wot whe'r¹ men will give me any thing.
 My purchase is th' effect of all my rent.
 Look how thou ridest for the same intent
 To winnen good, thou reckest never how,
 Right so fare I, for riden will I now
 Unto the worldë's endë for a prey.'

'Ah,' quod this Som'nour, '*benedicite!* what say ye?
 I ween'd ye were a yeoman truëly.
 Ye have a mannë's shape as well as I. 7040
 Have ye then a figüre determinate
 In hellë, there ye be in your estate?'

² Know.

'Nay certainly,' quod he, 'there have we none,
 But when us liketh we can take us one.
 Or ellës make you ween that we be shape
 Sometimë like a man, or like an ape;
 Or like an angel can I ride or go;
 It is no wonder thing though it be so,
 A lousy juggler can deceiven thee,
 And pardie yet can² I more craft than he.' 7050

'Why,' quod the Som'nour, 'ride ye then or gon
 In sundry shape, and not alway in one?'

'For we,' quod he, 'will us such formë make,
 As most is able our preyë for to take.'

'What maketh you to have all this labour?'

³ Apply.

'Full many a causë, levë Sir Som'nour,'
 Saidë this fiend. 'But allë thing hath time;
 The day is short, and it is passed prime,
 And yet ne won I nothing in this day;
 I will intend³ to winning, if I may, 7060

⁴ Because.

And not intend our thingës to declare:
 For, brother mine, thy wit is all too bare
 To understand, although I told them thee.
 But for⁴ thou askest, why labouren we:

For ¹ sometimes we be Goddē's instruments, And meanēs to do his commandēments, When that him list, upon his créatures, In divers acts and in diversé figúres : Withouten him we have no might certain, If that him list to standen thereagain. ²	7065	¹ Because.
And sometimes at our prayer have we leáve, Only the body, and not the soul to grieve : Witness on Job, whom that we didn ³ woe. And sometimes have we might on bothē two, This is to say, on soul and body eke. ⁴	7070	² Against it.
And sometimes be we suffer'd for to seek Upon a man, and do his soul unrest And not his body, and all is for the best. When he withstandeth our temptatió, n, It is a cause of his salvatió, n,	7080	³ Caused.
All be it that it was not our intent He should be safe, but that we would him hent. ⁵ And sometimes be we servants unto man, As to the archēbishop Saint Dunstan, And to the apostle servant eke was I.'		⁴ Also.
'Yet tell me,' quod this Som'nour, 'faithfully, Make ye you newē bodies thus alway Of elements ?' The fiend answéred, 'Nay : Sometimes we feign, and sometimes we arise With deadē bodies, in full sundry wise,	7090	⁵ Catch.
And speak as renably, ⁶ and fair, and well, As to the Pythoness did Samuel : And yet will some men say it was not he. I do no force ⁷ of your divinity.		⁶ Reason-ably.
But one thing warn I thee, I will not jape, ⁸ Thou wilt algatēs ⁹ weet ¹⁰ how we be shape : Thou shalt hereafterward, my brother dear, Come, where thee needeth not of me to lear, ¹¹		⁷ I heed not. ⁸ Jest. ⁹ Nevertheless. ¹⁰ Know. ¹¹ Learn.

¹ Learn.² Better.³ Briskly.

For thou shalt by thine own experience

7099

Conne¹ in a chaiër red of this sentence,

Bet² than Virgilë, while he was on live,

Or Dant' also. Now let us riden blive,³

For I will holden company with thee,

Till it be so that thou forsakë me.'

'Nay,' quod this Som'nour, 'that shall ne'er betide.

I am a yeoman, knowen is full wide ;

My truthë will I hold, as in this case ;

For though thou were the devil Sathanas,

My truthë will I hold to thee, my brother,

As I have sworn, and each of us to other,

7110

For to be truë brethren in this case,

And both we go abouten our purcháse.

Take thou thy part, what that men will thee give,

And I shall mine, thus may we bothë live.

And if that any of us have more than other,

Let him be true, and part it with his brother.'

'I grantë,' quod the devil, 'by my fay.'

And with that word they riden forth their way,

And right at ent'ring of the townë's end,

⁴ Prepared.

To which this Som'nour shope⁴ him for to wend, 7120

They saw a cart, that charged was with hay,

Which that a carter drove forth on his way.

Deep was the way, for which the cartë stood :

⁵ Mad.

The carter smote, and cried as he were wood,⁵

'Heit Scot! heit Brok! what, spare ye for the stones?

The fiend (quod he) you fetchë body and bones,

As farforthly as ever ye were foal'd,

⁶ Suffered

So muchel woe as I have with you tholed.⁶

7128

The devil have all, both horse, and cart, and hay.'

The Som'nour said, 'Here shall we have a prey;'

And near the fiend he drew, as nought ne were,*

* 'Nought ne were: ' Nothing were the matter.

Full privily, and rouned¹ in his ear:

7132

¹ Whisper-
ed.

‘Hearken, my brother, hearken, by thy faith,

Hearest thou not, how that the carter saith?

Hent² it anon, for he hath given it thee,

² Lay hold
of.

Both hay and cart, and eke his caples³ three.’

³ Horses.

‘Nay,’ quod the devil, ‘God wot, never a del,⁴

⁴ Whit.

It is not his intent, trust thou me well,

Ask him thyself, if thou not trowest⁵ me,

⁵ Believest.

Or ellës stint⁶ a while and thou shalt see.’

7140

⁶ Stop.

This carter thwacketh his horse upon the croup,

And they began to drawen and to stoop.

‘Heit now,’ quod he; ‘there, Jesu Christ you bless,

And all his handë’s work, both more and less!

That was well twight,⁷ mine owen liard⁸ boy,

⁷ Pulled.

I pray God save thy body and Saint Eloy.

⁸ Gray.

Now is my cart out of the slough pardie.’

‘Lo, brother,’ quod the fiend, ‘what told I thee?

Here may ye see, mine owen dear brothér,

The churl spake one thing, but he thought another.

Let us go forth abouten our viáge;⁹

7151

⁹ Journey.

Here win I nothing upon this carriáge.’

When that they comen somewhat out of town,

This Som’nour to his brother ’gan to roun;

‘Brother,’ quod he, ‘here wonneth an old rebeck,

That had almost as lief to lose her neck,

As for to give a penny of her good.

I will have twelve pence though that she be wood,¹⁰

¹⁰ Mad.

Or I will summon her to our office;

And yet, God wot, of her know I no vice.

7160

But for thou canst not, as in this countrý,

Winnen thy cost, take here example of me.’

This Som’nour clappeth at the widow’s gate;

‘Come out,’ he said, ‘thou oldë very trate;¹¹

¹¹ Term for
an old
woman.

I trow thou hast some friar or priest with thee.’

‘Who clappeth?’ said this wife, ‘*benedicite*, 7166
God save you, Sir, what is your sweetē will?’

‘I háve,’ quod he, ‘of summons here a bill.

¹ Upon.

Up¹ pain of cursing, lookē that thou be
To-morrow before the archēdeacon’s knee,
To answer to the court, of certain things.’

² Surely.

³ Am not
able.

‘Now lord,’ quod she, ‘Christ Jesu, king of kings,
So wisly² helpē me, as I ne may.³

I have been sick, and that full many a day.

I may not go so far (quod she) nor ride,

But I be dead, so prick’th it in my side.

May I not ask a libel, Sir Som’nour,

And answer there by my procuratour

⁴ Lay to
my
charge.

To such thing as men would apposen⁴ me?’

‘Yes,’ quod this Som’nour, ‘pay anon, let see, 7180

Twelve pence to me, and I will thee acquit.

⁵ Little.

I shall no profit have thereby but lit:⁵

My master hath the profit and not I.

Come off, and let me riden hastily;

Give me twelve pence, I may no longer tarry.’

‘Twelve pence!’ quod she, ‘now lady Saint Mary

So wisly help me out of care and sin,

This widē world though that I should it win,

Ne have I not twelve pence within my hold.

Ye knowen well that I am poor and old;

7190

⁶ Shew
your
charity.

Kithe your almess⁶ upon me poorē wretch.’

⁷ Ruined.

‘Nay then,’ quod he, ‘the foulē fiend me fetch,

If I thee’ excuse, though thou shouldést be spilt.’⁷

‘Alas!’ quod she, ‘God wot, I have no guilt.’

‘Pay me,’ quod he, ‘or by the sweet Saint Anne

As I will bear away thy newē pan

For debtē, which thou owest me of old,

When that thou madest thine husbánd cuckóld,

I paid at home for thy correction.’

‘Thou liest,’ quod she, ‘by my salvatiön
 Ne was I ne’er ere now, widow nor wife,
 Summon’d unto your court in all my life;
 Ne never I n’as but of my body true.
 Unto the devil rough and black of hue
 Give I thy body and my pan also.’ 7200

And when the devil heard her cursen so
 Upon her knees, he said in this mannere;

‘Now, Mabily, mine owen¹ mother dear,
 Is this your will in earnest that ye say?’

‘The devil,’ quod she, ‘so fetch him ere he dey,¹
 And pan and all, but he will him repent.’ 7211

‘Nay, oldë stoat,² that is not mine intent,’
 Quod this Som’nour, ‘for to repenten me
 For any thing that I have had of thee;
 I would I had thy smock and every cloth.’

‘Now, brother,’ quod the devil, ‘be not wroth;
 Thy body and this pan be mine by right.
 Thou shalt with me to hellë yet to-night,
 Where thou shalt known of our privity
 More than a master of divinity.’ 7220

And with that word the foulë fiend him hent.³
 Body and soul, he with the devil went,
 Where as these Som’nours have their heritage;
 And God that maked after his imáge
 Mankindë, save and guide us all and some,
 And lene⁴ this Som’nour good man to become.

Lordings, I could have told you, (quod this Frere,)
 Had I had leisure for this Som’nour here,
 After the text of Christ, and Paul, and John,
 And of our other doctors many one, 7230
 Such painës, that your heartës might agrise,⁵
 All be it so, that no tongue may devise,
 Though that I might a thousand winter tell,

¹ Die.² Polecat.³ Seized.⁴ Grant.⁵ Shudder.

¹ That
same.

² For
'pray.'

³ Seize.

The pains of thilk¹ cursed house of hell. 7234
 But for to keep us from that cursed place,
 Waketh, and prayeth² Jesu of his grace,
 So keep us from the tempter, Sathanas.
 Heark'neth this word, beware as in this case.
 The lion sits in his await alway
 To slay the innocent, if that he may. 7240
 Disposeth aye your heartës to withstond
 The fiend, that you would maken thrall and bond;
 He may not tempten you over your might,
 For Christ will be your champion and your knight;
 And prayeth, that this Som'nour him repent
 Of his misdeeds, ere that the fiend him hent.'³

THE SOMPNOUR'S PROLOGUE.

THIS Som'nour in his stirrups high he stood, 7247
 Upon this Friar his heartē was so wood,¹
 That like an aspen leaf he quoke for ire:
 Lordings, quod he, but one thing I desire,
 I you beseech, that of your courtesy,
 Since ye have heard this falsē Friar lie,
 As suffereth me I may my talē tell.

¹ Furious.

This Friar boasteth that he knoweth hell,
 And, God it wot, that is but little wonder,
 Friars and fiends be but little asunder.

For pardie, ye have often time heard tell,
 How that a friar ravish'd was to hell
 In spirit onēs by a visioun,
 And as an angel led him up and down, 7260
 To shewen him the painēs that there were,
 In all the placē saw he not a frere,
 Of other folk he saw enough in woe.

Unto this angel spake the friar tho;²
 'Now, Sir,' quod he, 'have friars such a grace,
 That none of them shall comen in this place?'

² Then.

'Yes,' quod this angel, 'many a millioun:'
 And unto Sathanas he led him down.
 (And now hath Sathanas, saith he, a tail

Broader than of a carrack is the sail.) 7270
 'Hold up thy tail, thou Sathanas,' quod he,
 'Shew forth thine ers, and let the friar see
 Where is the nest of friars in this place.'
 And ere than half a furlong way of space,
 Right so as bees out swarmen of a hive,
 Out of the devil's ers there 'gannen drive
 A twenty thousand friars on a rout.
 And throughout hell they swarmed all about,
 And come again, as fast as they may gon,
 And in his ers they creepen evereach one: 7280
 He clapt his tail again, and lay full still.

This friar, when he looked had his fill
 Upon the torments of this sorry place,
 His spirit God restoréd of his grace
 Into his body again, and he awoke;
 But natheless for fearë yet he quoke,
 So was the devil's ers aye in his mind,
 That is his heritage of very kind.¹

God save you allë, save this cursed Frere;
 My prologue will I end in this mannere. 7290

¹ By nature.

THE SOMPNOUR'S TALE.

LORDINGS, there is in Yorkshire, as I guess,
 A marsh country ycalled Holderness,
 In which there went a limiter² about
 To preach, and eke to beg, it is no doubt.
 And so befell that on a day this frere
 Had preached at a church in his mannere,
 And specially aboven every thing
 Excited he the people in his preaching

² Begging friar.

To trentals, and to give for Goddē's sake, 7299
 Wherewith men mighten holy houses make,
 There as divinē service is honour'd,
 Not there as it is wasted and devour'd,
 Ne there it needeth not for to be given,
 As to possessioners,* that mayen liven
 (Thanked be God) in wealth and abundance.
 'Trentals,' said he, 'deliveren from penānce
 Their friendēs' soulēs, as well old as young,
 Yea, when that they be hastily ysung,
 Not for to hold a priest, jolif¹ and gay,
 He singeth not but one mass on a day. 7310
 Delivereth out,' quod he, 'anon the souls.
 Full hard it is, with flesh-hook or with owls
 To be yclawed, or to burn or bake:
 Now speed you hastily for Christē's sake.'

And when this friar had said all his intent,
 With *qui cum patre* forth his way he went.
 When folk in church had giv'n him what them lest,²
 He went his way, no longer would he rest,
 With scrip and tipped staff, ytucked high:
 In every house he 'gan to pore and pry, 7320
 And begged meal and cheese, or ellēs corn.
 His fellow had a staff tipped with horn,
 A pair of tables all of ivory,
 And a pointel³ ypolish'd fetisly,⁴
 And wrote alway the namēs, as he stood,
 Of allē folk that gave them any good,
 Askauncē that he wouldē for them pray.
 'Give us a bushel wheat, or malt, or rey,⁵
 A Goddē's kichel,⁶ or a trippe⁷ of cheese,
 Or ellēs what you list, we may not chese;⁸ 7330

¹ Jolly.² Pleased.
³ A style,
 or pencil.
⁴ Neatly.
⁵ Rye.⁶ Little
 cake.⁷ Small
 piece.⁸ Choose.

* 'Possessioners:' A name given to such religious communities as were endowed with lands, &c.

A Goddë's halfpenny, or a mass penny; 7331
 Or give us of your brawn, if ye have any,
 A dagon¹ of your blanket, levë dame,
 Our sister dear, (lo, here I write your name,)
 Bacon or beef, or such thing as ye find.'

² Servant. A sturdy harlot² went them aye behind,
 That was their hostës man, and bare a sack,
 And what men gave them, laid it on his back.
 And when that he was out at door, anon
 He planed away the namës evereach one, 7340
 That he before had written in his tables:

³ Trifles. He served them with nifles³ and with fables.
 'Nay, there thou liest, thou Som'nour,' quod the
 Frere.

'Peace,' quod our Host, 'for Christë's mother dear,
 Tell forth thy tale, and spare it not at all.'

'So thrive I, (quod this Som'nour,) so I shall.'

So long he went from house to house, till he
⁴ Where. Came to an house, there⁴ he was wont to be
 Refreshed more than in a hundred places.
 Sick lay the husband man, whose that the place is,
 Bedrid upon a couchë now he lay: 7351

'*Deus hic*,' quod he, 'O Thomas friend, good day,'
 Saidë this friar all courteously and soft.

'Thomas,' quod he, 'God yield it you,* full oft
⁵ Well. Have I upon this bench faren full wele,⁵
 Here have I eaten many a merry meal.'

And from the bench he drove away the cat,
⁶ Walking-stick. And laid adown his potent⁶ and his hat,
 And eke his scrip, and set himself adown:
 His fellow was ywalked into town 7360

⁷ Servant. Forth with his knave,⁷ into that hostelry,
⁸ Purposed. Where as he shope⁸ him thilkë night to lie.

* 'God yield it you:' God reward you for it.

<p>‘O dearë master,’ quod this sickë man, ‘How have ye faren since that March began? I saw you not this fourteen night and more.’</p>	7363	
<p>‘God wot,’ quod he, ‘labour’d have I full sore, And specially for thy salvatiön Have I said many a precious orison, And for our other friendës, God them bless. I have this day been at your church at mess,¹ And said a sermon to my simple wit, Not all after the text of holy writ, For it is hard to you, as I suppose, And therefore will I teach you aye the glose.² Glosing is a full glorious thing certain, For letter slay’th, so as we clerkës sayn. There have I taught them to be charitable, And spend their good there³ it is reasonable. And there I saw our dame; ah, where is she?’</p>	7370	¹ Mass.
<p>‘Yonder I trow that in the yard she be,’ Saidë this man, ‘and she will come anon.’</p>	7380	
<p>‘Hey master, welcome be ye by Saint John,’ Saidë this wife; ‘how fare ye heartily?’ This friar ariseth up full courteously, And her embraceth in his armës narrow, And kisseth her sweet, and chirketh as a sparrow With his lippës: ‘Damë,’ quod he, ‘right well, As he that is your servant every del.⁴ Thanked be God, that you gave soul and life, Yet saw I not this day so fair a wife In all the churchë, God so savë me.’</p>	7390	⁴ Every whit.
<p>‘Yea, God amend defaultës, Sir,’ quod she, ‘Algatës⁵ welcome be ye, by my fay.’</p>		⁵ However.
<p>‘<i>Grand mercy</i>, Dame, that have I found alway. But of your greatë goodness, by your leave, I wouldë pray you that ye not you grieve,</p>		

¹ Confession.

I will with Thomas speak a little throw :
These curates be so negligent and slow
To gropen tenderly a consciéce.

7397

In shrift,¹ in preaching is my diligence
And study, in Peter's wordës and in Paul's,
I walk and fishë Christian mennë's souls,
To yield our Lord Jesu his proper rent;
To spread his word is set all mine intent.'

'Now by your faith, O dearë Sir,' quod she,
'Chideth him well for Saintë Charity.

² Cover.

He is aye angry as is a pismire,
Though that he have all that he can desire,
Though I him wrie² a-night, and make him warm,
And over him lay my leg and eke mine arm,
He groaneth as our boar, li'th in our sty:
Other disport of him right none have I,
I may not please him in no manner case.'

7410

³ Forbidden.

'O Thomas, *je vous dis*, Thomas, Thomas,
This maketh the fiend, this mustë be amended.
Ire is a thing that high God hath defended,³
And thereof will I speak a word or two.'

'Now, master,' quod the wife, 'ere that I go,
What will ye dine? I will go thereabout.'

'Now, Dame,' quod he, '*je vous dis sans doute*, 7420

⁴ Thin slice.

Have I not of a capon but the liver,
And of your whitë bread not but a shiver,⁴
And after that a roasted pigge's head,
(But I ne would for me no beast were dead,)
Then had I with you homely suffisáncé.
I am a man of little sustenáncé.

⁵ Pains-taking.

My spirit hath his fost'ring in the Bible.
My body is aye so ready and so penible⁵
To waken, that my stomach is destroy'd.

I pray you, Dame, that ye be nought annoy'd, 7430

Though I so friendly you my counsel shew ;	7431	
By God, I n' old ¹ have told it but a few.'		¹ Would not.
'Now, Sir,' quod she, 'but one word ere I go ;		
My child is dead within these weekës two,		
Soon after that ye went out of this town.'		
'His death saw I by revelatioun,'		
Saidë this friar, 'at home in our dortour. ²		² Dormitory.
I dare well say, that ere than half an hour		
After his death, I saw him borne to bliss		
In mine avision, so God me wiss. ³	7440	³ Direct.
So did our sexton, and our fermerere,*		
That have been truë friars fifty year ;		
They may now, God be thanked of his loan,		
Maken their jubilee, and walk alone.		
And up I rose, and all our convent eke,		
With many a tearë trilling on our cheek,		
Withouten noise or clattering of bells,		
<i>Te Deum</i> was our song, and nothing else,		
Save that to Christ I bade an orison,		
Thanking him of my revelatiön.	7450	
For, Sir and Damë, trusteth me right well,		
Our orisons be more effectuel,		
And more we see of Christë's secret things,		
Than borel folk, ⁴ although that they be kings.		⁴ Laymen.
We live in povert', and in abstinence,		
And borel folk in riches and dispense		
Of meat and drink, and in their foul delight.		
We have this worldë's lust ⁵ all in despight. ⁶		⁵ Pleasure.
Lazar and Dives liveden diversely,		⁶ Con-tempt.
And diverse guerdon hadden they thereby.	7460	
Whoso will pray, he must fast and be clean,		
And fat his soul, and keep his body lean.		

* 'Fermerere:' The officer in a monastery who had charge of the infirmary.

¹ Clothing.	<p>We fare, as saith the Apostle; cloth¹ and food 7463 Sufficeth us, though they be not full good. The cleanness and the fasting of us freres, Maketh that Christ accepteth our prayéres.</p> <p>‘Lo, Moses forty days and forty night Fasted, ere that the high God full of might Spake with him in the mountain of Sinay: With empty womb of fasting many a day, 7470 Received he the lawë, that was written</p>
² Know.	<p>With Goddë’s finger; and Eli, well ye witten,² In mount Oreb, ere he had any speech With highë God, that is our livës’ leech, He fasted long, and was in contemplance.</p> <p>‘Aaron, that had the temple in governance, And eke the other priestës every one, Into the temple when they shoulde gon To prayen for the people, and do servise, They n’olden³ drinken in no manner wise 7480 No drinkë, which that might them drunken make,</p>
³ Would not.	
⁴ Watch.	<p>But there in abstinencë pray and wake,⁴ Lest that they dieden: take heed what I say— But they be sober that for the people pray— Ware that I say—no more: for it sufficeth. Our Lord Jesu, as holy writ deviseth, Gave us example of fasting and prayeres:</p>
⁵ Simple.	<p>Therefore we mendicants, we sely⁵ freres, Be wedded to povert’ and continence, To charity, humbless, and abstinence, 7490 To persecutiön for righteousness,</p>
⁶ Compassion.	<p>To weeping, misericorde,⁶ and to cleanness. And therefore may ye see that our prayéres (I speak of us, we mendicants, we freres,) Be to the highë God more acceptable Than yourës, with your feastës at your table.</p>

'From Paradise first, if I shall not lie,
 Was man out chased for his gluttony,
 And chaste was man in Paradise certáin.
 But hearken now, Thomas, what I shall sayn,
 I have no text of it, as I suppose,
 But I shall find it in a manner glose;¹
 That specially our sweetë Lord Jesus
 Spake this by friars, when he saidë thus,
 "Blessed be they that poor in spirit be."
 And so forth all the gospel may ye see,
 Whether it be liker our professiön,
 Or theirs that swimmen in possessiön,
 Fie on their pomp, and on their gluttony,
 And on their lewëdness: I them defy.
 Me thinketh they be like Jovinian,
 Fat as a whale, and walken as a swan;
 All vinolent as bottle in the spence;²
 Their prayer is of full great reverence;
 When they for soulës say the Psalm of Davit,
 Lo, "Buf" they say, *Cor meum eructavit*,
 'Who followeth Christë's gospel and his lore³
 But we, that humble be, and chaste, and pore,⁴
 Workers of Goddë's word, not auditoúrs?
 Therefore right as an hawk upon a sours⁵
 Up spring'th into the air, right so prayéres
 Of charitable and chaste busy freres,
 Maken their sours to Goddë's earës two.
 Thomas, Thomas, so may I ride or go,
 And by that lord that cleped is Saint Ive,
 N'ere thou our brother, shouldest thou not thrive.
 In our chapíter pray we day and night
 To Christ, that he thee sendë health and might
 Thy body for to wielden hastily.'

7497

¹ Com-
ment.

7510

² Store-
room.³ Doctrine.⁴ Poor.

7520

⁵ A rise.

7530

'God wot,' quod he, 'nothing thereof feel I,

	As help me Christ, as I in fewē years	7531
¹ Divers sorts.	Have spendēd upon divers manner ¹ freres	
² Better.	Full many a pound, yet fare I never the bet; ²	
³ Laid out.	Certain my good have I almost beset: ³	
⁴ Gone.	Farewell my good, for it is all ago. ⁴	
	The friar answeŕ'd, 'O Thomas, dost thou so?	
	What needeth you diversē friars to seech?	
	What needeth him that hath a perfect leech,	
	To seekē other leeches in the town?	
	Your inconstānce is your confusiōn.	7540
	Hold ye then me, or ellēs our convent,	
	To pray for you be insufficiēt?	
⁵ Trick.	Thomas, that japē ⁵ n'is not worth a mite;	
⁶ Little.	Your malady is for we have too lite. ⁶	
	Ah, give that convent half a quarter oats;	
	And give that convent four and twenty groats;	
	And give that friar a penny, and let him go:	
	Nay, nay, Thomas, it may no thing be so.	
	What is a farthing worth parted on twelve?	
⁷ Made one, united.	Lo, eachē thing that is oned ⁷ in himselve	7550
	Is morē strong than when it is yscatter'd.	
	Thomas, of me thou shalt not be yflatter'd,	
	Thou wouldest have our labour all for nought.	
	The highē God, that all this world hath wrought,	
	Saith, that the workman worthy is his hire.	
	Thomas, nought of your treasure I desire	
	As for myself, but that all our convent	
	To pray for you is aye so diligent:	
	And for to builden Christē's owen chirch.	
⁸ Work.	Thomas, if ye will learnen for to wirch, ⁸	7560
	Of building up of churches may ye find	
	If it be good, in Thomas' life of Inde.	
⁹ Lie.	'Ye ligen ⁹ here full of anger and of ire,	
	With which the devil set your heart on fire,	

And chiden here this holy innocent 7565
Your wife, that is so good and patiént.

And therefore trow¹ me, 'Thomas, if thee lest,²

Ne strive not with thy wife, as for the best.

And bear this word away now by thy faith,

Touching such thing, lo, what the wisē saith:

¹ Believe.

² Please.

‘Within thy house ne be thou no lión;

To thy subjécts do none oppressiún;

Ne make thou not thine acquaintánce to flee.

‘And yet, Thomas, eftsoonēs charge I thee,

Beware from ire that in thy bosom sleepeth,

Ware from the serpent, that so slily creepeth

Under the grass, and stingeth subtilly.

Beware, my son, and hearken patiently,

That twenty thousand men have lost their lives

For striving with their lemans and their wives. 7580

Now since ye have so holy' and meek a wife,

What needeth you, Thomas, to maken strife?

There n'is ywis³ no serpént so cruél,

When man tread'th on his tail, nor half so fell,

As woman is, when she hath caught an ire;

Very vengeance is then all her desire.

³ Certainly.

‘Ire is a sin, one of the greatē seven,

Abominable unto the God of heaven,

And to himself it is destructiún.

This every lewēd⁴ vicar and parson

Can say, how ire engend'reth homicide;

Ire is in sooth executor of pride.

7590 ⁴ Ignorant.

‘I could of irē say so muchel sorrow,

My talē shoulde lasten till to-morrow.

And therefore pray I God both day and night,

An irous⁵ man God send him little might.

It is great harm, and certes great pity

To set an irous man in high degree.

⁵ Passionate.

¹ Chief magistrate.
² Term of office.

‘Whilom there was an irous potestat,¹ 7599
 As saith Senec, that during his estate²
 Upon a day out riden knightës two ;
 And, as fortunë would that it were so,
 That one of them came home, that other nought.
 Anon the knight before the judge is brought,
 That saidë thus ; “Thou hast thy fellow slain,
 For which I deem thee to the death certáin.”

³ Die.

⁴ Thought.

⁵ Counsel.

And to another knight commanded he ;
 “Go, lead him to the death, I chargë thee.”
 And happen’d, as they wenten by the way
 Toward the place there as he shouldë dey,³ 7610
 The knight came, which men wenden⁴ had been dead.
 Then thoughten they it was the bestë rede⁵
 To lead them bothë to the judge again.
 They saiden, “Lord, the knight ne hath not slain
 His fellow ; here he standeth whole alive.”

⁶ At all events.

““Ye shall be dead,” quod he, “so may I thrive,
 That is to say, both one, and two, and three.”
 And to the firstë knight right thus spake he :

⁷ Cause.

⁸ Given to drink.

⁹ Ill-tempered.

¹⁰ Attendants.

““I damned thee, thou must algate⁶ be dead :
 And thou also must needës lose thine head, 7620
 For thou art causë why thy fellow deyeth.”
 And to the thirdë knight right thus he sayeth,
 “Thou hast not done that I commanded thee.”
 And thus he did do⁷ slay them allë three.

⁸ Given to drink.

⁹ Ill-tempered.

¹⁰ Attendants.

‘Irous Cambyses was eke dronkelew,⁸
 And aye delighted him to be a shrew.⁹
 And so befell, a lord of his meinie,¹⁰
 That loved virtuous morality,
 Said on a day betwixt them two right thus :
 “A lord is lost, if he be vicious ; 7630
 And drunkenness is eke a foul record
 Of any man, and namely of a lord.

There is full many an eye and many an ear 7633

Awaiting on a lord, and he n'ot¹ whe'r.²

For Goddē's love, drink more attemprely:³

Wine maketh man to losen wretchedly

His mind, and eke his limbēs every one."

"The reverse shalt thou see," quod he, "anon,

And prove it by thine own experiēce,

That wine ne doth to folk no such offence. 7640

There is no wine bereaveth me my might

Of hand, nor foot, nor of mine eyen sight."

And for despite he drankē muchel more

An hundred part than he had done before,

And right anon, this cursed irous wretch

This knightē's sonē let before him fetch,

Commanding him he should before him stand:

And suddenly he took his bow in hand,

And up the string he pulled to his ear,

And with an arrow he slew the child right there. 7650

"Now whether have I a siker⁴ hand or non?"⁵

Quod he, "Is all my might and mind agone?

Hath wine bereaved me mine eyen sight?"

'What should I tell the answer of the knight?

His son was slain, there is no more to say.

Beware therefore with lordēs for to play,

Singeth *Placebo*, and I shall if I can,

But⁶ if it be unto a poorē man:

To a poor man men should his vices tell,

But not to a lord, though he should go to hell. 7660

'Lo, irous Cyrus, thilkē⁷ Persian,

How he destroyed the river of Gisen,

For that an horse of his was drent⁸ therein,

When that he wentē Babylon to win:

He madē that the river was so small,

That women might it waden over all.

¹ Knows
not.

² Whether.

³ Moderately.

⁴ Sure.

⁵ For 'not.'

⁶ Unless.

⁷ That.

⁸ Drowned.

Lo what said he, that so well teachen can? 7667

Ne be no fellow to none irous man,

¹ Furious.

Ne with no wood¹ man walkē by the way,
Lest thee repent; I will no further say.

‘Now, Thomas, levē brother, leave thine ire,
Thou shalt me find as just as is a squire;
Hold not the devil’s knife aye to thine heart,
Thine anger doth thee all too sorē smart,
But shew to me all thy confessiōn.’

² Confessed.

‘Nay,’ quod the sickē man, ‘by Saint Simon
I have been shriven² this day of my curāte;
I have him told all wholly mine estate.
Needeth no more to speak of it, saith he,
But if me list of mine humility.’

7680

‘Give me then of thy gold to make our cloister,’
Quod he, ‘for many a mussel and many an
oyster,

³ Raise.

When other men have been full well at ease,
Hath been our food, our cloister for to rese :³

⁴ Scarcely.

And yet, God wot, uneth⁴ the fundament⁵

⁵ Foundation.

Performed is, nor of our pavēment

⁶ Habitation.

N’is not a tilē yet within our wones :⁶

By God, we owen forty pound for stones.

Now help, Thomas, for him that harrow’d hell,

For ellēs must we ourē bookēs sell,

7690

And if ye lack our predication,

Then go’th this world all to destructiōn.

For whoso from this world would us bereave,

So God me savē, Thomas, by your leave,

He would bereave out of this world the sun.

⁷ Are able.

For who can teach and worken as we conne ?⁷

And that is not of little time, (quod he,)

⁸ Since.

But sithen⁸ Elie was, and Elisee,

Have friars been, that find I of record,

In charity, ythanked be our Lord. 7700

Now, Thomas, help for Saintë Charity.'

And down anon he set him on his knee.

This sickë man wox well nigh wood for ire,

He wouldë that the friar had been a-fire

With his falsë dissimulatiön,

'Such thing as is in my possessiön,'

Quod he, 'that may I give you and none other :

Ye say me thus, how that I am your brother.'

'Yea certes,' quod this friar, 'yea, trusteth well ;

I took our dame the letter of our seal.' 7710

'Now well,' quod he, 'and somewhat shall I give

Unto your holy convent while I live ;

And in thine hand thou shalt it have anon,

On this conditiön, and other none,

That thou depart¹ it so, my dearë brother,

That every friar have as much as other :

This shalt thou swear on thy professiön

Withouten fraud or cavillation.'

'I swear it,' quod the friar, 'upon my faith.'

And therewithal his hand in his he lay'th ; 7720

'Lo here my faith, in me shall be no lack.'

'Then put thine hand adown right by my back,'

Saidë this man, 'and gropë well behind,

Beneath my buttock, there thou shaltë find

A thing, that I have hid in privity.'

'Ah,' thought this friar, 'that shall go with me.'

And down his hand he launcheth to the clift,

In hopë for to finden there a gift.

And when this sickë man feltë this frere

About his towel gropen there and here, 7730

Amid his hand he let the friar a fart ;

There n'is no capel² drawing in a cart,

That might have let a fart of such a soun.

¹ Divide.

² Draught-horse.

¹ Fierce.	The friar up start, as doth a wood ¹ lioún:	7734
² Purpose.	‘Ah, falsē churl,’ quod he, ‘for Goddē’s bones, This hast thou in despite done for the nones: ² Thou shalt abyë this fart, if that I may.’	
³ Servants.	His meinie, ³ which that hearden this affray, Came leaping in, and chased out the frere,	
⁴ Countenance.	And forth he go’th with a full angry chere, ⁴	7740
⁵ Fetched.	And fet ⁵ his fellow, there as lay his store: He looked as it were a wildē boar,	
⁶ Ground.	And grintē ⁶ with his teeth, so was he wroth. A sturdy pace down to the court he go’th, Where as there wonn’d a man of great honour, To whom that he was alway confessour: This worthy man was lord of that villāge. This friar came, as he were in a rage, Where as this lord sat eating at his board:	
⁷ With difficulty.	Unnethēs ⁷ might the friar speak one word, Till attē last he saidē, ‘God you see.’	7750
	This lord ’gan look, and said, ‘ <i>Benedicite!</i> What? Friar John, what manner world is this? I see well that something there is amiss; Ye looken as the wood were full of thievēs. Sit down anon, and tell me what your grieve is, And it shall be amended, if I may.’	
⁸ Reward you.	‘I have,’ quod he, ‘had a despite to-day, God yieldē you, ⁸ adown in your villāge, That in this world there n’is so poor a page,	7760
⁹ Would not.	That he n’old ⁹ have abominatioun Of that I have received in your town: And yet ne grieveth me nothing so sore, As that the oldē churl, with lockēs hoar, Blasphemed hath our holy convent eke.’ ‘Now, master,’ quod this lord, ‘I you beseeek.’ ‘No master, Sir,’ quod he, ‘but servitour,	

Though I have had in schoolë that honóur. 7768
 God liketh not, that men us Rabbi call,
 Neither in market, nor in your large hall.'

'No force,'¹ quod he, 'but tell me all your grief.'

¹ No matter.

'Sir,' quod this friar, 'an odious mischief
 This day betid is to mine order, and me,
 And so *per consequens* to each degree
 Of holy churchë, God amend it soon.'

'Sir,' quod the lord, 'ye wot what is to don:
 Distemper you not, ye be my confessour.
 Ye be the salt of the earth, and the savour;
 For Goddë's love your patiéce now hold;
 Tell me your grief.' And he anon him told 7780
 As ye have heard before, ye wot well what.

The lady of the house aye stillë sat,
 Till she had heardë what the friar said.

'Hey, Goddë's mother,' quod she, 'blissful maid,
 Is there ought ellës? tell me faithfully.'

'Madame,' quod he, 'how thinketh you thereby?'

'How that me thinketh?' quod she; 'so God me
 speed,

I say, a churl hath done a churlë's deed.
 What should I say? God let him never the;²

² Thrive.

His sickë head is full of vanity; 7790
 I hold him in a manner³ phrenesy.'

³ Sort of.

'Madame,' quod he, 'by God, I shall not lie,
 But I in other wise may be awreke,⁴

⁴ Revenged.

I shall diffame him over all, there I speak;
 This falsë blasphemour, that charged me
 To parten that will not departed be,
 To every man alikë, with mischance.'

The lord sat still, as he were in a trance,
 And in his heart he rolled up and down,
 How had this churl imaginatioun

7800

To shewen such a problem to the frere.

7801

¹ Before. 'Never erst¹ ere now ne heard I such mattere;

² Believe. I trow² the Devil put it in his mind.

³ Arithmetical. In all arismetrikē³ shall there no man find

Before this day of such a questioun.

Who shouldē make a demonstratioun,

That every man should have alike his part

As of a sound or savour of a fart?

⁴ Curse. O nicē proudē churl, I shrew⁴ his face.

'Lo, Sirēs,' quod the lord, 'with hardē grace,* 7810

Who ever heard of such a thing ere now?

To every man alikē? tell me how.

It is an impossiblé, it may not be.

⁵ Foolish. Hey, nicē⁵ churl, God let him never the.⁶

⁶ Thrive.

The rumbling of a fart, and every soun,

N'is but of airē reverberatioun,

⁷ Little. And ever it wasteth lite and lite⁷ away;

There n'is no man can deemen, by my fay,

⁸ Divided. If that it were departed⁸ equally.

⁹ Ill-temperedly. What? lo, my churl, lo yet how shrewedly⁹

7820

Unto my confessoúr to-day he spake;

I hold him certain a demoniac.

Now eat your meat, and let the churl go
play,

Let him go hang himself a devil way.'

Now stood the lordē's squier attē board,

That carved his meat, and heardē word by word

Of all this thing, of which I have you said.

'My lord,' quod he, 'be ye not evil apaid,¹⁰

¹⁰ Ill-satisfied.

I couldē tellē for a gownē-cloth¹¹

¹¹ Cloth for a gown.

To you, Sir Friar, so that ye be not wroth,

7830

How that this fart should even ydealed be

Among your convent, if it liked thee.'

* 'With hardē grace:': May misfortune attend him (the churl).

'Tell,' quod the lord, 'and thou shalt have anon
A gownë-cloth, by God and by Saint John.' 7834

'My lord,' quod he, 'when that the weather is fair,
Withouten wind, or perturbíng of air,
Let¹ bring a cart-wheel here into this hall,
But lookë that it have his spokës all;

¹ Cause.

Twelve spokës hath a cart-wheel commonly;
And bring me then twelve friars, weet² ye why?

² Know.

For thirteen is a convent as I guess: 7841

Your confessór here for his worthiness
Shall perfórm up the number of his convent.

Then shall they kneel adown by one assent,
And to every spokë's end in this mannére

Full sadly³ lay his nosë shall a frere;

³ Carefully.

Your noble cónfessor, there God him save,
Shall hold his nose upright under the nave.

Then shall this churl, with belly stiff and tought⁴

⁴ Tight.

As any tabour, hither be ybrought; 7850

And set him on the wheel right of this cart

Upon the nave, and make him let a fart,

And ye shall see, up peril of my life,

By very proof that is demonstrative,

That equally the sound of it will wend,⁵

⁵ Go.

And eke the stink, unto the spokës' end,

Save that this worthy man, your confessoúr,

(Because he is a man of great honoúr,)

Shall have the firstë fruit, as reason is.

The noble usage of friars yet it is, 7860

The worthy men of them shall first be served.

And certainly he hath it well deserved;

He hath to-day taught us so muchel good,

With preaching in the pulpit there he stood,

That I may vouchësafe, I say for me,

He had the firstë smell of fartës three,

And so would all his brethren hardily;
He beareth him so fair and holily.'

7867

The lord, the lady, and each man, save the frere,
Saiden, that Jankin spake in this mattere
As well as Euclid, or else Ptolomy.
Touching the churl, they saiden, subtilty
And high wit made him speaken as he spake;
He n'is no fool, ne no demoniac.
And Jankin hath ywon a newë gown;
My tale is done, we be almost at town.

THE CLERK'S PROLOGUE.

'SIR Clerk of Oxenford,' our Hostë said, 7877
 'Ye ride as still and coy, as doth a maid,
 Were newë spoused, sitting at the board:
 This day ne heard I of your tongue a word.

I trow ye study abouten some sophime:¹
 But Solomon saith, that every thing hath time.
 For Goddë's sake as be of better cheer,
 It is no timë for to studiën here.

¹ Sophism.

Tell us some merry talë by your fay;²
 For what man that is enter'd in a play,
 He needës must unto the play assent.
 But preacheth not, as friars do in Lent,
 To make us for our oldë sinnës weep,
 Ne that thy talë make us not to sleep. 7890

² Faith.

'Tell us some merry thing of áventures,
 Your terms, your colourës, and your figúres,
 Keep them in store, till so be ye indite
 High style, as when that men to kingës write.
 Speaketh so plain at this time, I you pray,
 That we may understanden what ye say.'

This worthy Clerk benignëly answér'd;
 'Hostë,' quod he, 'I am under your yerd,³
 Ye have of us as now the governance,
 And therefore would I do you obéisance, 7900

³ Yard,
wand of
direction.

- ¹ Boldly. As far as reason asketh hardily:¹ 7901
I will you tell a talë, which that I
- ² Padua. Learned at Padow⁴ of a worthy clerk,
As proved by his wordës and his werk.
He is now dead, and nailed in his chest,
I pray to God so give his soulë rest.
- ³ Was called. Francis Petrarc, the laureat poët,
Hightë² this clerk, whose retorikë sweet
Illumin'd all Itaille of poetry, 7910
As Linian did of philosophy,
Or law, or other art particulere:
But death, that will not suffer us dwellen here,
But as it were a twinkling of an eye,
Them both hath slain, and allë we shall die.
- ‘But forth to tellen of this worthy man,
That taughtë me this tale, as I began,
I say that first he with high style inditeth
(Ere he the body of his talë writeth)
A proem, in the which describeth he
- ⁴ Saluzzo. Piedmont, and of Saluces⁴ the country, 7920
And speak’th of Apennine the hillës high,
That be the boundës of west Lombardy:
And of Mount Vesulus in special,
Where as the Po out of a wellë small
Taketh his firstë springing and his source,
That eastward aye increaseth in his course
To Emilie* ward, to Ferare, and Veníce,
The which a longë thing were to devise.
And truëly, as to my judgëment,
Me thinketh it a thing impertinent, 7930
Save that he will conveyen his mattere :
But this is the tale which that ye may hear.’

* ‘To Emilie:’ A district of Italy, so called from the Via Æmilia, by which it is traversed.

THE CLERK'S TALE.

THERE is right at the West side of Itáille, 7933
 Down at the root of Vesulus the cold,
 A lusty¹ plain, abundant of vitáille,
 There many a town and tower thou may'st behold,
 That founded were in time of fathers old,
 And many another delectable sight,
 And Saluces this noble country hight.²

¹ Pleasant.² Is called.

A marquis whilom lord was of that land, 7940
 As were his worthy elders³ him before,
 And obeisant, aye ready to his hand,
 Were all his lieges, bothë less and more :
 Thus in delight he liveth, and hath done yore,⁴
 Belov'd and drad,⁵ through favour of fortune,
 Both of his lordës, and of his commúne.⁶

³ Ancestors.⁴ Long.⁵ Dreaded.⁶ Commonalty.

Therewith he was, to speaken of lin'age,
 The gentilest yborn of Lombardy,
 A fair person, and strong, and young of age,
 And full of honour and of courtesy : 7950
 Discreet enough, his country for to gie,⁷
 Save in some thingës that he was to blame,
 And Walter was this youngë lordë's name.

⁷ Guide.

I blame him thus, that he consider'd nought
 In timë coming what might him betide,
 But on his lust⁸ present was all his thought,
 And for to hawk and hunt on every side :
 Well nigh all other carës let he slide,
 And eke he n'old⁹ (and that was worst of all)
 Wedden no wife for ought that might befall. 7960

⁸ Pleasure.⁹ Would not.

¹ Together
in a flock.

² Either
that.

³ Com-
plain.

⁴ Al-
though

⁵ Please.

Only that point his people bare so sore,
That flockmel¹ on a day to him they went,
And one of them, that wisest was of lore,
(Or ellës that² the lord would best assent
That he should tell him what the people meant,
Or ellës could he well shew such mattére,)
He to the marquis said as ye shall hear.

7961

‘O noble Marquis! your humanity
Assureth us and giveth us hardiness,
As oft as time is of necessity,
That we to you may tell our heaviness:
Accepteth, Lord, then of your gentleness,
That we with piteous heart unto you plain,³
And let your earës not my voice disdain.

7970

‘All⁴ have I not to do in this mattere
More than another man hath in this place,
Yet for as much as ye, my Lord so dear,
Have alway shewed me favóur and grace,
I dare the better ask of you a space
Of audience, to shewen our request,
And ye, my Lord, to do right as you lest.⁵

7980

‘For certes, Lord, so well us liketh you
And all your work, and ever have done, that we
Ne coulden not ourself devisen how
We mighten live in more felicity:
Save one thing, Lord, if it your willë be,
That for to be a wedded man you lest,
Then were your people in sovereign heartës rest.

‘Boweth your neck under the blissful yoke
Of sovërignty, and not of servíce,

7990

Which that men clepen¹ spousal or wedlock: 7991 ¹ Call.

And thinketh, Lord, among your thoughtës wise,
How that our dayës pass in sundry wise;
For though we sleep, or wake, or roam, or ride,
Aye fle'th the time, it will no man abide.

‘ And though your greenë youthë flower as yet,
In creepeth age alway as still as stone,
And death menáceth every age, and smit² ² Smiteth.
In each estate, for there escapeth none:
And all so certain, as we know each one 8000
That we shall die, as uncertain we all
Be of that day when death shall on us fall.

‘ Accepteth then of us the true intent,
That never yet refuseden your hest,³ ³ Com-
And we will, Lord, if that ye will assent, mand.
Choose you a wife in short time at the mest,⁴ ⁴ Most.
Born of the gentilest and of the best
Of all this land, so that it oughtë seem
Honour to God and you, as we can deem.

‘ Deliver us out of all this busy drede,⁵ 8010 ⁵ Doubt.
And take a wife, for highë Goddë's sake:
For if it so befell, as God forbede,
That through your death your lineage should slake,
And that a strangë súccessor should take
Your heritage, oh! woe were us on live:⁶
Wherefore we pray you hastily to wive.’ ^{Us who survive.}

Their meekë prayér and their piteous cheer,
Madë the marquis for to have pity.

‘ Ye will,’ quod he, ‘ mine owen people dear,
To that I ne’er ere thought constrainen me. 8020

I me rejoiced of my liberty,
That seldom time is found in marriage;
There¹ I was free, I must be in servage.

8021

¹ Where.

‘But nathëless I see your true intent,
And trust upon your wit, and have done aye:
Wherefore of my free will I will assent
To wedden me, as soon as e’er I may.
But there as ye have proffer’d me to-day
To choosen me a wife, I you release
That choice, and pray you of that proffer cease. 8030

‘For God it wot, that children often been
Unlike their worthy elders them before,
Bounty² com’th all of God, not of the strenne,³
Of which they be ygender’d and ybore:
I trust in Goddë’s bounty, and therefore
My marriage, and mine estate, and rest
I him betake;⁴ he may do as him lest.⁵

² Goodness.³ Stock,
race.⁴ Com-
mend to
him.⁵ Please.

‘Let me alone in choosing of my wife,
That charge upon my back I will endure:
But I you pray, and charge upon your life, 8040
That what wife that I take, ye me assure
To worship her while that her life may dure,
In word and work both here and ellës where,
As she an emperorë’s daughter were.

‘And furthermore this shall ye swear, that ye
Against my choice shall never grutch⁶ nor
strive.

For since I shall forego my liberty
At your request, as ever may I thrive,
There as mine heart is set, there will I wive:

⁶ Murmur

And, but¹ ye will assent in such mannere,
I pray you speak no more of this mattere.'

8050

¹ Unless.

With heartly will they sworn and assenten
To all this thing, there said not one wight nay:
Beseeching him of grace, ere that they wenten,
That he would granten them a certain day
Of his spousal, as soon as e'er he may,
For yet alway the people somewhat dread,
Lest that this marquis wouldë no wife wed.

He granted them a day, such as him lest,²
On which he would be wedded sikerly,³
And said he did all this at their request;
And they with humble heart full buxomly⁴
Kneeling upon their knees full reverently
Him thanken all, and thus they have an end
Of their intent, and home again they wend.

8060

² Pleased.³ Certainly.⁴ Obediently.

And hereupon he to his officérs
Commandeth for the feastë to purvey.
And to his privy knightës and squiérs
Such charge he gave, as him list on them lay:
And they to his commandement obey,
And each of them doth all his diligence
To do unto the feast all reverence.

8070

PARS SECUNDA.

Nought far from thilkë⁵ palace honouërable,
Where as this marquis shope⁶ his marriage,
There stood a thorp,⁷ of sightë delectáble,
In which that poorë folk of that villáge
Hadden their beastës and their harbourage,⁸

⁵ That.⁶ Prepared.⁷ Village.⁸ Dwelling.

And of their labour took their sustenance, 8078
 After that th' earthë gave them ábundance.

Among this poorë folk there dwelt a man;
 Which that was holden poorest of them all:
 But highë God sometimë senden can
 His grace unto a little ox's stall:
 Janicola, men of that thorp him call.
 A daughter had he, fair enough to sight,
 And Grisildis this youngë maiden hight.

But for to speak of virtuous beauty,
 Then was she one the fairest under sun:
 Full poorëly yfoster'd up was she:
 No likerous¹ lust was in her heart yrun; 8090
 Well ofter of the well than of the tun
 She drank, and for² she wouldë virtue please,
 She knew well labour, but no idle ease.

But though this maiden tender were of age,
 Yet in the breast of her virginity
 There was inclosed sad³ and ripe couráge:⁴
 And in great reverence and charity
 Her oldë poorë father foster'd she:
 A few sheep spinning on the field she kept,
 She wouldë not be idle till she slept. 8100

And when she homeward came, she wouldë bring
 Wortës⁵ and other herbës timës oft,
 The which she shred and seeth'd for her living,
 And made her bed full hard, and nothing soft:
 And aye she kept her father's life on loft⁶
 With every obeisance and diligence,
 That child may do to father's reverence.

¹ Gluttonous.

² Because.

³ Grave.

⁴ Spirit.

⁵ Cabbages.

⁶ Up, aloft.

Upon Grisild', this poorë créature,
 Full often sithe¹ this marquis set his eye,
 As he on hunting rode paraventure :
 And when it fell that he might her espy,
 He not with wanton looking of folly
 His eyen cast on her, but in sad² wise
 Upon her chere³ he would him oft avise,⁴

8108

¹ Times.² Serious.³ Countenance,
mien.⁴ Consider.⁵ Feminine qualities.

Commending in his heart her womanhede,⁵
 And eke her virtue, passing any wight
 Of so young age, as well in chere as deed.
 For though the people have no great insight
 In virtue, he considered full right
 Her bounty,⁶ and disposed that he would
 Wed her only, if ever he wedden should.

8120

⁶ Goodness.

The day of wedding came, but no wight can
 Tellen what woman that it shouldë be,
 For which mervailë wonder'd many a man,
 And saiden, when they were in privy,
 'Will not our lord yet leave his vanity ?
 Will he not wed? Alas, alas the while!
 Why will he thus himself and us beguile?'

But nathëless this marquis hath done⁷ make
 Of gemmës, set in gold and in azüre,
 Brooches and ringës, for Grisilda's sake,
 And of her clothing took he the measüre
 Of a maiden like unto her stature,
 And eke of other ornamentës all,
 That unto such a wedding shouldë fall.

8130

⁷ Caused.

The time of undern⁸ of the samë day
 Approacheth, that this wedding shouldë be,

⁸ Nine
o'clock.

And all the palace put was in array,
Both hall and chambers, each in his degree,
Houses of office stuffed with plenty
There may'st thou see of dainteous vitaille,
That may be found, as far as lasteth Itaille.

8138

This royal marquis richely array'd,
Lordes and ladies in his company,
The which unto the feastē weren pray'd,
And of his retinue the bach'lery,
With many a sound of sundry melody,
Unto the village, of the which I told,
In this array the rightē way they hold.

Grisild' of this (God wot) full innocent,
That for her shapen was all this array,
To fetchen water at a well is went,
And cometh home as soon as e'er she may.
For well she had heard say, that thilkē¹ day
The marquis shoulde wed, and, if she might,
She wouldē fain have seen some of that sight.

8150

¹ That
same.

She thought, 'I will with other maidens stond,
That be my fellows, in our door, and see
The marchioness, and thereto will I fond²
To do at home, as soon as it may be,
The labour which that 'longeth unto me,
And then I may at leisure her behold,
If she this way unto the castle hold.'

8160

² Strive.

And as she would over the threshold gon,
The marquis came and 'gan her for to call,
And she set down her water-pot anon
Beside the threshold in an ox's stall,

And down upon her knees she 'gan to fall, 8168
 And with sad¹ countenancë kneeleth still,
 Till she had heard what was the lordë's will.

¹ Steady.

This thoughtful marquis spake unto this
 maid

Full soberly, and said in this mannere :
 'Where is your father, Grisildis?' he said.
 And she with reverence in humble cheer
 Answered, 'Lord, he is already here.'
 And in she go'th withouten longer let,²
 And to the marquis she her father fet.³

² Delay.

³ Fetched.

He by the hand then took this poorë man,
 And saidë thus, when he him had aside :

'Janicola, I neither may nor can 8180
 Longer the pleasance of mine heartë hide,
 If that thou vouchësafe, whatso betide,
 Thy daughter will I take, ere that I wend⁴
 As for my wife, unto her lifë's end.

⁴ Go.

'Thou lovest me, that wot I well certáin,
 And art my faithful liegëman ybore,
 And all that liketh me, I dare well sayn
 It liketh thee, and specially therefore
 Tell me that point, that I have said before,
 If that thou wilt unto this purpose draw, 8190
 To taken me as for thy son-in-law.'

This sudden case⁵ this man astonied so,
 That red he wax'd, abash'd, and all quaking
 He stood, unnethes⁶ said he wordës mo,⁷
 But only thus; 'Lord,' quod he, 'my willing
 Is as ye will, nor against your liking

⁵ Event.

⁶ Scarcely.

⁷ More.

I will no thing, mine owen lord so dear,
Right as you list, governeth this mattere.'

8197

'Then will I,' quod this marquis softely,
'That in thy chamber, I, and thou, and she,
Have a collatiön,¹ and wost² thou why?
For I will ask her, if it her will be
To be my wife, and rule her after me:
And all this shall be done in thy preséncé,
I will not speak out of thine audiéncé.'

¹ Confer-
ence.
² Knowest.

And in the chamber, while they were about
The treaty, which as ye shall after hear,
The people came into the house without,
And wonder'd them, in how honést mannére
Attentively she kept her father dear:
But utterly Grisildis wonder might,
For never erst³ ne saw she such a sight.

8210

No wonder is though that she be astoned,
To see so great a guest come in that place,
She never was to no such guestës woned,⁴
For which she looked with full palë face.
But shortly forth this matter for to chase,⁵
These are the wordës that the marquis said
To this benignë, very,⁶ faithful maid.

⁴ Accus-
tomed.

⁵ Dismiss.

⁶ True.

'Grisild,' he said, 'ye shall well understand, 8220
It liketh to your father and to me,
That I you wed, and eke it may so stand
As I suppose, ye will that it so be:
But these demandës ask I first (quod he)
That since it shall be done in hasty wise,
Will ye assent, or ellës you avise?⁷

⁷ Consider.

'I say this, be ye ready with good heart
To all my lust,¹ and that I freely may
As me best thinketh, do² you laugh or smart,
And never ye to grutchen,³ night nor day,
And eke when I say Yea, ye say not Nay,
Neither by word, nor frowning countenance?
Swear this, and here I swear our álliance.'

8227

¹ Pleasure.² Cause.³ Murmur.

Wond'ring upon this thing, quaking for drede,
She saidë; 'Lord, indign and unworthy
Am I, to thilk⁴ honóur, that ye me bede,⁵
But as ye will yourself, right so will I:
And here I swear, that never willingly
In work, nor thought, I n'ill you disobey
For to be dead, though me were loth to dey.'⁶

8240

⁴ This.⁵ Offer.⁶ Die.

'This is enough, Grisilda mine,' quod he.
And forth he go'th with a full sober cheer,
Out at the door, and after then came she,
And to the people he said in this mannére:
'This is my wife,' quod he, 'that standeth here.
Honoureth her, and loveth her, I pray,
Whoso me loveth; there n'is no more to say.'

And for that nothing of her oldë gear
She shouldë bring into his house, he bade
That women should despoilen her right there,
Of which these ladies weren nothing glad
To handle her clothës wherein she was clad:
But nathëless this maiden bright of hue
From foot to head they clothed have all new.

8250

Her hairës have they kempt, that lay untress'd
Full rudëly, and with their fingers small

A coroune on her head they have ydress'd, 8257
 And set her full of nouches great and small:
 Of her array what should I make a tale?
¹ Scarcely. Unneth¹ the people her knew for her fairness,
 When she transmewed was in such richness.

This marquis hath her spoused with a ring
 Brought for the samē cause, and then her set
 Upon a horse snow-white, and well ambling,
² Delayed. And to his palace, ere he longer let,²
 (With joyful people, that her led and met,)
 Conveyed her, and thus the day they spend
 In revel, till the sunnē 'gan descend.

And shortly forth this talē for to chase,
 I say, that to this newē marchioness 8270
 God hath such favour sent her of his grace,
 That it ne seemeth not by likeliness
 That she was born and fed in rudēness,
 As in a cot, or in an ox's stall,
 But nourish'd in an emperorē's hall.

To every wight she waxen is so dear,
³ Where. And worshipful, that folk there³ she was bore,
 And from her birthē knew her year by year,
⁴ Scarcely believed. Unnethes trowed⁴ they, but durst have swore, 8280
 That to Janicle, of which I spake before,
⁵ Was not. She daughter n'as,⁵ for as by conjecture
 Them thought she was another créature.

For though that ever virtuous was she,
 She was increased in such excellence
⁶ Qualities. Of thewēs⁶ good, yset in high bounty,
 And so discreet, and fair of eloquence

So benign, and so digne of reverence,
 And couldē so the people's heart embrace,
 That each her lov'th that looketh on her face.

8287

Not only of Saluces in the town
 Published was the bounty of her name,
 But eke beside in many a regioún;
 If one saith well, another saith the same:
 So spreadeth of her high bounty the fame,
 That men and women, young as well as old,
 Go to Saluces upon her to behold.

Thus Walter lowly, nay but royally,
 Wedded with fortunate honestety,¹
 In Goddē's peace liveth full easily
 At home, and grace enough outward had
 he:

¹ Virtue.

8300

And for he saw that under low degree
 Was honest virtue hid, the people him held
 A prudent man, and that is seen full seld.²

² Seldom.

Not only this Grisildis through her wit
 Could all the feat³ of wifely homeliness,
 But eke when that the case required it,
 The common profit couldē she redress:
 There n'as discord, rancour, ne heaviness
 In all the land, that she ne could appease,
 And wisely bring them all in heartēs ease.

³ Act, performance.

8310

Though that her husband absent were or non,
 If gentlemen, or other of that countrý
 Were wroth, she wouldē bringen them at one,
 So wise and ripē wordēs haddē she,
 And judgēment of so great equity,

¹ Thought. That she from heaven sent was, as men wend,¹ 8316
People to save, and every wrong t' amend.

Not longē time after that this Grisild'
Was wedded, she a daughter hath ybore,
² Rather. All had her lever² have born a knavē³ child: 8320
³ Male. Glad was the marquis and his folk therefore,
For though a maiden child come all before,
She may unto a knavē child attain
By likelihood, since she n'is not barrén.

PARS TERTIA.

There fell, as it befalleth timēs mo,
⁴ Little When that his child had sucked but a throw,⁴
while. This marquis in his heartē longed so
⁵ Stead- To tempt his wife, her sadness⁵ for to know,
fastness. That he ne might out of his heartē throw
⁶ Try. This marvellous desire his wife t' assay,⁶ 8330
⁷ Alarm, Needless, God wot, he thought her to affray.⁷
disturb.

He had assayed her enough before,
And found her ever good; what needeth it
Her for to tempt, and alway more and more?
Though some men praise it for a subtle wit,
⁸ Ill befits. But as for me, I say that evil it fit⁸
T' assay a wife when that it is no need,
And putten her in anguish and in drede.

For when this marquis wrought in this mannere;
He came a-night alone there as she lay, 8340
With sternē face, and with full troubled chere,⁹
⁹ Counte- And saidē thus; 'Grisild', (quod he,) that day
nance. That I you took out of your poor array,

And put you in estate of high nobless, 8344
Ye have it not forgotten, as I guess.

‘I say, Grisild’, this present dignity,
In which that I have put you, as I trow,¹ 8350
Maketh you not forgetful for to be
That I you took in poor estate full low,
For any weal ye must yourselven know.
Take heed of every word that I you say,
There is no wight that heareth it but we tway.²

‘Ye wot yourself well how that ye came here
Into this house, it is not long ago;
And though to me ye be right lief³ and dear,
Unto my gentles ye be nothing so:
They say, to them it is great shame and woe
For to be subjects, and be in servage
To thee, that born art of a small lineage.

‘And namely, since thy daughter was ybore, 8360
These wordes have they spoken doubtless;
But I desire, as I have done before,
To live my life with them in rest and peace:
I may not in this case be reckëless;
I must do with thy daughter for the best,
Not as I would, but as my gentles lest.⁴

‘And yet, God wot, this is full loth to me:
But nathëless withouten your weeting⁵ 8370
I will nought do, but thus will I (quod he)
That ye to me assenten in this thing.
Shew now your patience in your working,
That ye me hight⁶ and swore in your villâge
The day that maked was our marriage.’

¹ Believe.² Two.³ Pleasant⁴ Please.⁵ Knowing.⁶ Pro-
mised.

¹ Moved.

When she had heard all this, she not amoved¹
 Neither in word, in cheer, nor countenance, 8375
 (For as it seemed, she was not aggrieved,)

² Destroy.

She said; 'Lord, all li'th in your pleasance,
 My child and I, with heartly obeisance
 Be yourës all, and ye may save or spill,²
 Your owen thing : worketh after your will. 8380

³ Mind.

'There may no thing, so God my soulë save,
 Like unto you, that may displeasen me :
 Nor I desirë nothing for to have,
 Nor dreadë for to lose, save only ye :
 This will is in mine heart, and aye shall be,
 No length of time, or death may this deface,
 Nor change my courage³ to another place.'

⁴ Mien.

Glad was this marquis for her answering,
 But yet he feigned as he were not so ;
 All dreary was his chere⁴ and his looking, 8390
 When that he should out of the chamber go.
 Soon after this, a furlong way or two,
 He privily hath told all his intent
 Unto a man, and to his wife him sent.

⁵ Kind of.

A manner⁵ sergeant was this private man,
 The which he faithful often founden had
 In thingës great, and eke such folk well can
 Do executiön on thingës bad :

⁶ Dreaded.

The lord knew well, that he him loved and drad.⁶
 And when this sergeant wist his lordë's will, 8400
 Into the chamber he stalked him full still.

'Madam,' he said, 'ye must forgive it me,
 Though I do thing, to which I am constrain'd :

Ye be so wise, that right well knowen ye,
That lordës' hestës'¹ may not be yfeign'd,
They may well be bewailed and complain'd,
But men must needës to their lust² obey,
And so will I, there n'is no more to say.

8404

¹ Com-
mands.² Pleasure.

'This child I am commanded for to take.'
And spake no more, but out the child he hent³
Despiteously,⁴ and 'gan a chere⁵ to make,
As though he would have slain it, ere he went.
Grisildis must all suffer and all consent:
And as a lamb, she sitteth meek and still,
And let this cruel sergeant do his will.

8410

³ Took.⁴ Unpity-
ingly.
⁵ Demea-
nour.

Suspicious was the diffame⁶ of this man,
Suspect his face, suspect his word also,
Suspect the time in which he this began:
Alas! her daughter, that she loved so,
She ween'd he would have slayen it right tho,⁷
But nathëless she neither wept nor siked,⁸
Conforming her to that the marquis liked.

8420

⁷ Then.⁸ Sighed.

But at the last to spoken she began,
And meekely she to the sergeant pray'd
(So as⁹ he was a worthy gentle man)
That she might kiss her child, ere that it deid:¹⁰
And in her barme¹¹ this little child she leid,¹²
With full sad face, and 'gan the child to bliss,
And lulled it, and after 'gan it kiss.

⁹ As
though.
¹⁰ Died.
¹¹ Lap.
¹² Laid.

And thus she said in her benignë voice:
'Farewell, my child, I shall thee never see,
But since I have thee marked with the cross,
Of thilk¹³ father, yblessed may thou be,

8430

¹³ That.

¹ Com-
mend to.

That for us died upon a cross of tree:
Thy soulë, little child, I him betake,¹
For this night shalt thou dien for my sake.'

8434

² Believe.
³ Nurse.
⁴ Object of
pity.

I trow² that to a nourice³ in this case
It had been hard this ruthë⁴ for to see:
Well might a mother then have cried, Alas!
But nathëless so sad steadfást was she,
That she endured all adversity,
And to the sergeant meekëly she said,
'Have here again your little youngë maid.

8440

⁵ Com-
mand.

'Go now (quod she) and do my lordë's hest:⁵
And one thing would I pray you of your grace,
But⁶ if my lord forbade you at the lest,⁷

⁶ Unless.
⁷ Least.

Bury this little body in some place,
That beastës ne no birdës it to-race.'⁸

⁸ Tear.

But he no word to that purpóse would say,
But took the child and went upon his way.

8450

⁹ Demea-
nour.

This sergeant came unto his lord again,
And of Grisilda's wordës and her chere⁹
He told him point for point, in short and
plain,
And him presented with his daughter dear.
Somewhat this lord hath ruth in his mannére,
But nathëless his purpose held he still,
As lordës do, when they will have their will,

And bade this sergeant that he privily
Shouldë this child full softë wind and wrap,
With allë circumstances tenderly,
And carry it in a coffer, or in a lap;
But upon pain his head off for to swap¹⁰

8460

¹⁰ Strike.

That no man shouldē know of his intent, 8463
Nor whence he came, nor whither that he went;

But at Bologn', unto his sister dear,
That thilkē time of Pavie was Countess,
He should it take, and shew her this mattére,
Beseeching her to do her business:
This child to foster in all gentleness,
And whose child that it was he bade her hide 8470
From every wight, for ought that may betide.

This sergeante go'th, and hath fuffill'd this thing.
But to this marquis now returnē we;
For now go'th he full fast imagining,
If by his wifē's chere¹ he mightē see,
Or by her wordēs apperceive, that she
Were changed, but he never could her find,
But ever in one alikē sad² and kind.

¹ Demeanour.

² Steadfast.

As glad, as humble, as busy in service
And eke in love, as she was wont to be, 8480
Was she to him, in every manner wise;³
Nor of her daughter not a word spake she:
No accident for no adversity
Was seen in her, ne never her daughter's name
Ne nevened⁴ she, for earnest nor for game.

³ Sort of way.

⁴ Uttered.

PARS QUARTA.

In this estate there passed been four year
Ere shē with childē was, but, as God wold,
A knavē child she bare by this Waltere
Full graciōus, and fair for to behold:
And when that folk it to his father told, 8490

Not only he, but all his country merry 8461
 Was for this child, and God they thank and hery.¹

¹ Praise.

When it was two year old, and from the breast
 Departed of his nourice, on a day

² Inclina-
 tion.

This marquis caughte yet another lest²
 To tempt his wife yet ofter, if he may.

³ Trial.

Oh! needless was she tempted in assay,³
 But wedded men ne connen⁴ no measure,
 When that they find a patient créature.

⁴ Know.

‘Wife,’ quod this marquis, ‘ye have heard ere this
 My people sickly bearen our marriage, 8501

⁵ Born.

And namely since my son yboren⁵ is,
 Now is it worse than ever in all our age:
 The murmur slay’th mine heart and my couráge,
 For to mine ears cometh the voice so smart,
 That it well nich destroyed hath mine heart.

‘Now say they thus, “When Walter is agone,
 Then shall the blood of Janicle succeed,
 And be our lord, for other have we none:”

⁶ Doubt.

Such wordës say my people, it is no drede.⁶ 8510

Well ought I of such murmur taken heed,
 For certainly I dread all such sentéce,
 Though they not plainen⁷ in mine audiéce.

⁷ Com-
 plain.

‘I wouldë live in peace, if that I might:

Wherefore I am disposed utterly,
 As I his sister served ere⁸ by night,
 Right so think I to serve him privily.

⁸ Before.

This warn I you, that ye not suddenly
 Out of yourself for no woe should outraie;⁹
 Be patient, and thereof I you pray.’ 8520

⁹ Become
 outrageous.

‘I have,’ quod she, ‘said thus and ever shall, 8521
 I will no thing, ne n’ill no thing certain,
 But as you list: not grieveth me at all,
 Though that my daughter and my son be slain
 At your commandement: that is to sayn,
 I have not had no part of children twain,
 But first sickness, and after woe and pain.

‘Ye be my lord, do with your owen thing
 Right as you list, asketh no rede¹ of me:
 For as I left at home all my clothing 8530
 When I came first to you, right so (quod she)
 Left I my will and all my liberty,
 And took your clothing: wherefore I you pray,
 Do your pleasánce, I will your lust² obey.

¹ Advice.² Pleasure.

‘And certes, if I haddë prescience
 Your will to know, ere ye your lust me told,
 I would it do withouten negligence:
 But now I wot your lust, and what ye wold,
 All your pleasancë firm and stable I hold;
 For wist I that my death might do you ease, 8540
 Right gladly would I dien, you to please.

‘Death may not maken no comparisoun
 Unto your love.’ And when this marquis say³
 The constance of his wife, he cast adown
 His eyen two, and wond’reth how she may
 In paciënce suffer all this array:
 And forth he go’th with dreary countenance,
 But to his heart it was full great pleasance.

³ Saw.

This ugly sergeant in the samë wise
 That he her daughter caughtë, right so he

8550

¹ Taken.² Unvary-
ingly.³ Demea-
nour.

(Or worse, if men can any worse devise,) Hath hent¹ her son, that full was of beauty:

8551

And ever in one² so patiént was she,
That she no cherë³ made of heaviness,
But kiss'd her son and after 'gan it bless.

⁴ Cared.

Save this she prayed him, if that he might,
Her little son he would in earthë grave,
His tender limbës, delicate to sight,
From fowlës and from beastës for to save.
But she none answer of him mightë have;
He went his way, as him no thing ne rought,⁴
But to Bologn' he tenderly it brought.

8560

⁵ Thought.⁶ Com-
posed.

This marquis wond'reth ever longer the more
Upon her patiënce; and if that he
Ne haddë soothly knowen therebefore,
That perfectly her children loved she,
He would have ween'd⁵ that of somé subtilty
And of malíce, or for cruel couráge,
That she had suffer'd this with sad⁶ viságe.

But well he knew, that next himself, certain 8570
She loved her children best in every wise.
But now of women would I asken fain,
If these assayës mighten not suffice?
What could a sturdy husband more devise
To prove her wifhood, and her steadfastness,
And he continuing ever in sturdiness?

⁷ Cease.

But there be folk of such conditiön,
That when they have a certain purpose take,
They cannot stint⁷ of their intention,
But, right as they were bounden to a stake,

8580

They will not of their firstë purpose slake: 8581
 Right so this marquis fully hath purposed
 To tempt his wife, as he was first disposed.

He waiteth, if by word or countenance
 That she to him was changed of couráge:¹
 But never could he finden variance,
 She was aye one in heart and in viságe,
 And aye the further that she was in age,
 The morë true (if that it were possible)
 She was to him in love, and more penible.² 8590

For which it seemed thus, that of them two
 There was but one will; for as Walter lest,³
 The samë lust⁴ was her pleasáncë also;
 And God be thanked, all fell for the best.
 She shewed well, for no worldly unrest
 A wife, as of herself, no thing ne should
 Will in effect, but as her husband would.

The slander of Walter wonder widë sprad,
 That of a cruel heart he wickedly,
 For⁵ he a poorë woman wedded had, 8600
 Hath murder'd both his children privily:
 Such murmur was among them commonly.
 No wonder is: for to the people's ear
 There came no word, but that they murder'd
 were.

For which thereas⁶ his people therebefore
 Had loved him well, the slander of his diffame⁷
 Made them that they him hateden therefore:
 To be a murderer is a hateful name.
 But nathëless, for earnest nor for game,

¹ Spirit.² Pains-taking.³ Pleased.⁴ Pleasure.⁵ Because.⁶ Whereas.⁷ Evil report.

¹ Would
not stop.

He of his cruel purpose n'oldë stent,¹
To tempt his wife was set all his intent.

8610

² Messen-
ger.

When that his daughter twelve year was of age,
He to the court of Rome, in subtle wise
Informed of his will, sent his messáge,²
Commanding him, such billës to devise,
As to his cruel purpose may suffice,
How that the Pope, as for his people's rest,
Bade him to wed another, if him lest.³

³ Pleased.

⁴ Leave.

I say he bade they shouldeñ counterfeit
The Pope's bullës, making mention
That he hath leave his firstë wife to lete,⁴
As by the Popë's dispensation,
To stinten⁵ rancour and dissension
Betwixt his people and him: thus spake the bull,
The which they have published at the full.

8620

⁵ Stay.

⁶ Steadfast.

The rudë people, as no wonder is,
Ween'den full well, that it had been right so:
But when these tidings came to Grisildis,
I deemë that her heart was full of woe;
But she alikë sad⁶ for evermo
Disposed was, this humble créature,
The adversity of fortune all to endure;

8630

⁷ Suffi-
ciency

Abiding ever his lust and his pleasance,
To whom that she was given, heart and all,
As to her very worldly suffisance.⁷
But shortly if this story tell I shall,
This marquis written hath in special
A letter, in which he sheweth his intent,
And secretly he to Bologn' it sent,

To the Earl of Pavie, which that haddë tho¹ 8640 ¹ Then.
 Wedded his sister, pray'd he specially
 To bringen home again his children two
 In honourable estate all openly:
 But one thing he him prayed utterly,
 That he to no wight, though men would inquere,
 Shouldë not tell whose children that they were,

But say, the maiden should ywedded be
 Unto the Marquis of Salúce' anon.
 And as this earl was prayed, so did he,
 For at day set he on his way is gone 8650
 Toward Salúce', and lordës many one
 In rich array, this maiden for to guide,
 Her youngë brother riding her beside.

Arrayed was towárd her marriáge
 This freshë maiden, full of gemmës clear,
 Her brother, which that seven year was of age,
 Arrayed eke full fresh in his mannère:
 And thus in great nobless and with glad cheer
 Towárd Saluces shaping their journáy
 From day to day they riden in their way. 8660

PARS QUINTA.

Among all this, after his wick'd uságe,
 This marquis yet his wife to tempten more
 To the utterestë proof of her couráge,
 Fully to have experience and lore,²
 If that she were as steadfast as before,
 He on a day in open audience
 Full boist'rously hath said here this sentence:

² Know-
ledge.

‘ Certes, Grisild’, I had enough pleasánce
 To have you to my wife, for your goodness,
 And for your truth, and for your obeisánce,
 Not for your lineage, nor for your richness,
 But now know I in very soothfastness,
 That in great lordship, if I me well avise,
 There is great servitude in sundry wise.

8668

‘ I may not do, as every ploughman may:
 My people me constraineth for to take
 Another wife, and cryen day by day;
 And eke the Popë, rancour for to slake
 Consenteth it, that dare I undertake:
 And truëly, thus much I will you say,
 My newë wife is coming by the way.

8680

‘ Be strong of heart, and void anon her place,
 And thilkë¹ dower that ye broughten me
 Take it again, I grant it of my grace.
 Returneth to your father’s house, (quod he,)
 No man may alway have prósperity.
 With even heart I rede² you to endure
 The stroke of fortune, or of áventure.’

¹ The
 same.

² Counsel.

And she again answér’d in patiéncé:
 ‘ My Lord,’ quod she, ‘ I wot, and wist alway,
 How that betwixen your magnificence
 And my povert’ no wight ne can nor may
 Maken comparison, it is no nay;³
 I ne’ held me never digné⁴ in no mannére
 To be your wife, nor yet your chamberere.⁵

8690

³ Not to be
 denied.

⁴ Worthy.

⁵ Chamber-
 maid.

‘ And in this house, there ye me lady made,
 (The highë God take I for my witness,

And all so wisly¹ he my soulë glad,)
 I never held me lady nor mistress,
 But humble servant to your worthiness,
 And ever shall, while that my life may dure,
 Aboven every worldly créature.

8698 ¹ Surely.

‘That ye so long of your benignity
 Have holden me in honour and nobley,²
 Whereas I was not worthy for to be,
 That thank I God and you, to whom I pray
 Foryield it you; there is no more to say:
 Unto my father gladly will I wend,³
 And with him dwell unto my life's end;

² Nobility.³ Go.

‘There I was foster'd of a child full small;
 Till I be dead my life there will I lead,
 A widow clean in body, heart and all.
 For since I gave to you my maidenhede,
 And am your truë wife, it is no drede,⁴
 God shieldë⁵ such a lordë's wife to take
 Another man to husband or to make.⁶

8710

⁴ Doubt.⁵ Forbid.⁶ Mate.

‘And of your newë wife, God of his grace
 So grant you wealë and prosperity:
 For I will gladly yelden her my place,
 In which that I was blissful wont to be.
 For since it liketh you, my Lord, (quod she,)
 That whilom weren all mine heartë's rest,
 That I shall go, I will go when you lest.⁷

8720

⁷ Please.

‘But thereas⁸ ye me proffer such dowáire
 As I first brought, it is well in my mind,
 It were my wretched clothës, nothing fair,
 The which to me were hard now for to find.

⁸ Whereas.

O goodē God! how gentle and how kind
 Ye seemed by your speech and your visāge,
 The day that maked was our marriāge!

8728

¹ At all
 events.

‘But sooth is said, algate¹ I find it true,
 For in effect it proved is on me,
 Love is not old, as when that it is new.
 But certes, Lord, for no adversity
 To dien in this case, it shall not be
 That ever in word or work I shall repent,
 That I you gave mine heart in whole intent.

² Doubt.

‘My Lord, ye wot, that in my father’s
 place
 Ye did me strip out of my poorē weed,
 And richēly ye clad me of your grace;
 To you brought I nought ellēs out of drede,²
 But faith, and nakedness, and maidenhede;
 And here again your clothing I restore,
 And eke your wedding ring for evermore.

8740

³ Cheer-
 fully.

‘The remnant of your jewels ready be
 Within your chamber, I dare it safely sayn:
 Naked out of my father’s house, (quod she,)
 I came, and naked I must turn again.
 All your pleasancē would I follow fain:³
 But yet I hope it be not your intent,
 That I smocklæss out of your palace went.

8750

⁴ Dishon-
 ourable.

‘Ye could not do so dishonést⁴ a thing,
 That thilkē womb, in which your children lay,
 Sholdē before the people, in my walking,
 Be seen all barē: wherefore I you pray
 Let me not like a worm go by the way:

Remember you, mine owen Lord so dear,
I was your wife, though I unworthy were.

8757

‘Wherefore in guerdon of my maidenhede,
Which that I brought and not again I bear,
As vouchësafe to give me to my meed
But such a smock as I was wont to wear,
That I therewith may wrie¹ the womb of her
That was your wife: and here I take my leave
Of you, mine owen Lord, lest I you grieve.’

¹ Cover.

‘The smock,’ quod he, ‘that thou hast on thy back,
Let it be still, and bear it forth with thee.’
But well unnethes² thilkë³ word he spake,
But went his way for ruth and for pity.
Before the folk herselven strippeth she,
And in her smock, with foot and head all bare,
Toward her father’s house forth is she fare.⁴

8770

² Scarcely.
³ This.⁴ Gone.

The folk her followen weeping in their way,
And fortune aye they cursen as they gon:
But she from weeping kept her eyen drey,
Nor in this timë word ne spake she none.
Her father, that this tiding heard anon,
Curseth the day and timë, that nature
Shope⁵ him to be a living créature.

⁵ Formed.

For out of doubt this oldë poorë man
Was ever in súspect of her marriáge:
For ever he deemed, since it first began,
That when the lord fulfill’d had his couráge,⁶
Him wouldë think it were a disparáge
To his estate, so low for to alight,
And voiden her as soon as ever he might.

8780

⁶ Inclination.

¹ To meet.

Again¹ his daughter hastily go'th he,
 (For he by noise of folk knew her coming.)
 And with her oldē coat, as it might be,
 He covereth hēr full sorrowfully weeping:
 But on her body might he it not bring,
 For rudē was the cloth, and more of age
 By dayēs fele² than at her marriage.

8787

² Many.

Thus with her father for a certain space
 Dwelleth this flower of wifely patiēce,
 That neither by her wordēs nor her face,
 Before the folk, nor eke in their absence,
 Ne shewed she that her was done offence,
 Nor of her high estate no rémembrance
 Ne haddē she, as by her countenance.

8800

³ Spirit.
⁴ Full.

No wonder is, for in her great estate
 Her ghost³ was ever in plein⁴ humility;
 No tender mouth, no heartē delicate,
 No pompē, no semblánt of royalty;
 But full of patiént benignity,
 Discreet, and pridēless, aye honouráble,
 And to her husband ever meek and stable.

⁵ Little.

Men speak of Job, and most for his humbless,
 As clerkēs, when them list, can well indite,
 Namely of men, but as in soothfastness,
 Though clerkēs praisen women but a lite,⁵
 There can no man in humbless him acquite
 As woman can, nor can be half so true
 As women be,—but it be fall of new.*

8810

* 'But it be fall of new : ' Unless it be lately come to pass.

PARS SEXTA.

From Bologn' is this Earl of Pavie come, 8815
 Of which the fame up sprang to more and less:
 And to the people's earës all and some
 Was couth¹ eke, that a newë marchioness
 He with him brought, in such pomp and richness,
 That never was there seen with mannë's eye
 So noble array in all West Lombardy.

¹ Known.

The marquis, which that shope² and knew all this,
 Ere that this Earl was come, sent his messáge³
 For thilkë poorë sely⁴ Grisildis;
 And she with humble heart and glad viságe,
 Not with no swollen thought in her couráge,⁵
 Came at his hest,⁶ and on her knees her set,
 And reverently and wisely she him gret.⁷

² Contriv-
ed.³ Messen-
ger.⁴ Simple.⁵ Mind.⁶ Order.⁷ Greeted.

'Grisild',' quod he, 'my will is utterly,
 This maiden, that shall wedded be to me, 8830
 Received be to-morrow as royally
 As it possíble is in mine house to be:
 And eke that every wight in his degree
 Have his estate in sitting and service,
 And high pleasánce, as I can best devise.

I have no woman suffisant, certáin,
 The chambers for t' array in ordinance
 After my lust,⁸ and therefore would I fain,
 That thine were all such manner governance:
 Thou knowest eke of old all my pleasánce;
 Though thine array be bad, and evil besey,⁹
 Do thou thy devoir at the leastë way.'¹⁰

⁸ Pleasure.

8840

⁹ Bescem.¹⁰ In the
quickest
manner.

‘Not only, Lord, that I am glad,’ quod she, 8843
 ‘To do your lust, but I desire also
 You for to serve and please in my degree,
 Withouten fainting, and shall evermo:
 Ne never for no weal, nor for no woe,
 Ne shall the ghost within mine heartē stent¹
 To love you best with all my true intent.’

¹ Cease.² Arrange.

And with that word she ‘gan the house to dight,²
 And tables for to set, and beddēs make, 8851
 And pained her to do all that she might,
 Praying the chambereres for Goddē’s sake
 To hasten them, and fastē sweep and shake,
 And she the mostē serviceable of all
 Hath every chamber arrayed, and his hall.

³ Nine
o’clock.

Abouten undern³ ‘gan this Earl alight,
 That with him brought these noble children tway;
 For which the people ran to see the sight

⁴ Beseem.

Of their array, so richēly beseey:⁴ 8860

⁵ First.

And then at erst⁵ amongēs them they say,

⁶ Please.

That Walter was no fool, though that him lest⁶
 To change his wife; for it was for the best.

For she is fairer, as they deemen all,
 Than is Grisild’, and morē tender of age,
 And fairer fruit between them shouldē fall,
 And more pleasánt for her high lineage:
 Her brother eke so fair was of viságe,
 That them to see the people hath caught pleasánce,
 Commending now the marquiss’ governance. 8870

⁷ Un-
steady.
⁸ Vane.

‘O stormy people, unsad⁷ and ever untrue,
 And undiscreet, and changing as a fane,⁸

Delighting ever in rombel ¹ that is new,	8878	¹ Rumour.
For like the moonë waxen ye and wane :		
Aye full of clapping, dear enough a jane, ²		² A small coin.
Your doom ³ is false, your constance evil preveth, ⁴		³ Judgment.
A full great fool is he that on you 'lieveth.'		⁴ Preveth.

Thus saiden sadë ⁵ folk in that city,		⁵ Sedate.
When that the people gazed up and down ;		
For they were glad, right for the novelty,	8880	
To have a newë lady of their town.		
No more of this make I now mentioun,		
But to Grisild' again I will me dress,		
And tell her constance, and her business.		

Full busy was Grisild' in every thing,		
That to the feastë was appertinent ;		
Right naught was she abaist ⁶ of her clothing,		⁶ Ashamed.
Though it were rude, and somedeal eke to-rent,		
But with glad cherë ⁷ to the gate is went		⁷ Mien.
With other folk, to greet the marchioness,	8890	
And after that doth forth her business.		

With so glad cheer his guestës she receiveth		
And conningly ⁸ evereach in his degree,		⁸ Cleverly.
That no defaultë no man apperceiveth,		
But aye they wond'ren what she mightë be,		
That in so poor array was for to see,		
And couldë such honour and reverence,		
And worthily they praisen her prudence.		

In all this meanë whilë she ne stent ⁹		⁹ Ceased.
This maid and eke her brother to commend	8900	
With all her heart in full benign intent,		
So well, that no man could her praise amend :		

¹ Go. But at the last when that these lordës wend¹ 8903
To sitten down to meat, he 'gan to call
Grisild', as she was busy in the hall.

'Grisild', (quod he, as it were in his play,)
How liketh thee my wife, and her beauty?'
² Faith. 'Right well, my Lord,' quod she, 'for in good
fay,²

A fairer saw I never none than she:
I pray to God give you prosperity; 8910
And so I hope, that he will to you send
Pleasance enough unto your livës' end.

'One thing beseech I you, and warn also,
That ye ne prickë with no tórmenting
³ Me. This tender maiden, as ye have done mo:³
For she is foster'd in her nourishing
More tenderly, and to my supposing
She mightë not adversity endure,
As could a poorë foster'd créature.'

And when this Walter saw her patiënce, 8920
Her gladë cheer, and no malíce at all,
And he so often had her done offence,
⁴ Steadfast. And she aye sad⁴ and constant as a wall,
Continuing ever her innocence o'er all,
⁵ Prepare. This sturdy marquis 'gan his heartë dress⁵
To rue upon her wifely steadfastness.

'This is enough, Grisilda mine,' quod he,
⁶ Reward- 'Be now no more aghast, nor evil apaid,⁶
ed. I have thy faith and thy benignity,
As well as ever woman was, assay'd 8930
In great estate, and poorëly array'd:

Now know I, dearë wife, thy steadfastness,' 8932
And her in armës took, and 'gan to kiss.

And she for wonder took of it no keep;¹ 8932
She heardë not what thing he to her said:
She fared as she had start out of a sleep,
Till she out of her mazedness abraid.² 8932
'Grisild,' quod he, 'by God that for us dey'd,
Thou art my wife, none other I ne have,
Ne never had, as God my soulë save. 8940

'This is thy daughter, which thou hast supposed
To be my wife; that other faithfully
Shall be mine heir, as I have aye disposed;
Thou bare them of thy body truëly:
At Bologn' have I kept them privily:
Take them again, for now may'st thou not say,
That thou hast lorn³ none of thy children tway. 8950

'And folk, that otherwise have said of me,
I warn them well, that I have done this deed
For no malice, ne for no cruelty, 8950
But for t' assay in thee thy womanhede:
And not to slay my children (God forbede)
But for to keep them privily and still,
Till I thy purpose knew, and all thy will.'

When she this heard, aswoonë down she falleth
For piteous joy; and after her swooning
She both her youngë children to her calleth,
And in her armës piteously weeping
Embraceth them, and tenderly kissing
Full like a mother with her saltë tears 8960
She bathed both their visage and their heres.⁴ 8960

¹ Notice.² Awoke.³ Lost.⁴ Hair.

¹ What. O, which¹ a piteous thing it was to see 8962
 Her swooning, and her humble voice to hear!
 ‘*Grand mercy*, Lord, God thank it you, (quod she,)
 That ye have saved me my children dear:
² Care. Now reck² I never to be dead right here,
 Since I stand in your love, and in your grace,
³ No mat- No force³ of death, nor when my spirit pace.⁴

⁴ Departs.
 ‘O tender, O dear, O youngë children mine,
⁵ Believed firmly. Your woful mother weened steadfastly,⁵ 8970
 That cruel houndës, or some foul vermín
 Had eaten you; but God of his mercy,
 And your benignë father tenderly
⁶ Caused. Hath done⁶ you keep:’ and in that samë stound⁷
⁷ Instant. All suddenly she swapt⁸ adown to ground.
⁸ Fell.

⁹ Firmly. And in her swoon so sadly⁹ holdeth she
 Her children two, when she ’gan them embrace,
¹⁰ Art. That with great sleight¹⁰ and great difficulty
¹¹ Pluck. The children from her arm they ’gan arrace¹¹
 O! many a tear on many a piteous face 8980
 Down ran of them that stooden her beside,
¹² Scarcely. Unnethe¹² abouten her might they abide.

Walter her gladdeth, and her sorrow slaketh;
 She riseth up abashed from her trance,
 And every wight her joy and feastë maketh,
 Till she hath caught again her countenance.
 Walter her doth so faithfully pleasánce,
 That it was dainty for to see the cheer
¹³ Com- Betwixt them two, since they been met in fere.¹³
 pany.

¹⁴ Saw. These ladies, when that they their timë sey,¹⁴ 8990
 Have taken her, and into chamber gone,

And strippen her out of her rude array, 8992
 And in a cloth of gold that brightē shone,
 With a coroune of many a richē stōne
 Upon her head, they into hall her brought:
 And there she was honoured as her ought.

Thus hath this piteous day a blissful end;
 For every man and woman doth his might
 This day in mirth and revel to dispend,
 Till on the welkin shone the starrēs bright: 9000
 For more solemn in every mannē's sight
 This feastē was, and greater of costage,
 Than was the revel of her marriage.

Full many a year in high prosperity
 Liven these two in concord and in rest,
 And richely his daughter married he
 Unto a lord, one of the worthiest
 Of all Itaille, and then in peace and rest
 His wifē's father in his court he keepeth,
 Till that the soul out of his body creepeth. 9010

His son succeedeth in his heritage,
 In rest and peace, after his father's day:
 And fortunate was eke in marriage,
 All¹ put he not his wife in great assay:
 This world is not so strong, it is no nay,²
 As it hath been in oldē timēs yore,
 And heark'neth, what this author saith therefore.

This story is said, not for that wivēs should
 Follow Grisild' as in humility,
 For it were importable,³ though they would;
 But for that every wight in his degree

¹ Al-
though.
² Not to be
denied.

³ Intole-
rable.

Shouldë be constant in adversity,
As was Grisilda, therefore Petrarch writeth
This story, which with hígh style he' inditeth.

9022

¹ Good-will.

For since a woman was so patiënt
Unto a mortal man, well more we ought
Receiven all in gree¹ that God us sent.
For great skill* is he proved that he wrought:
But he ne tempteth no man that he bought,
As saith Saint James, if ye his 'pistle read ;
He proveth folk all day, it is no drede:²

9030

² Doubt.

And suff'reth us, as for our exercise,
With sharpë scourges of adversity
Full often to be beat in sundry wise ;
Not for to know our will, for certes he,
Ere we were born, knew all our frailëty ;
And for our best is all his governance ;
Let us then live in virtuous sufferance.

But one word, Lordings, heark'neth, ere I go :
It were full hard to finden now-a-days
In all a town Grisildas three or two :
For if that they were put to such assays,
The gold of them hath now so bad allays³
With brass, that though the coin be fair at eye,
It wouldë rather brast⁴ a-two than plie.⁵

9040

³ Alloys.⁴ Break.
⁵ Bend.⁶ Damage.

For which here, for the wifë's love of Bath,
Whose life and all her sectë God maintene
In high mast'ry, and ellës were it scath,⁶
I will with lusty heartë fresh and green,
Say you a song to gladden you, I ween :

9050

* ' For great skill : ' He who does so is proved to possess great skill.

And let us stint of earnestful mattére. 9051
 Heark'neth my song, that saith in this mannére.

Grisild' is dead, and eke her patience,
 And both at onës buried in Itaille:
 For which I cry in open audience,
 No wedded man so hardy be t' assail
 His wifë's patiënce, in trust to find
 Grisilda's, for in certain he shall fail.

O noble wivës, full of high prudence,
 Let no humility your tonguës nail: 9060
 Ne let no clerk have cause or diligence
 To write of you a story of such marvail,
 As of Grisilda patiënt and kind,
 Lest Chichévache you swallow in her entrail.

Followeth Echo, that holdeth no silence,
 But ever answereth at the countertaille:¹
 Be not bedaffed² for your innocence,
 But sharply taketh on you the governaille:³
 Imprinteth well this lesson in your mind,
 For common profit, since it may avail. 9070

Ye archëwivës,⁴ stand'th aye at defence,
 Since ye be strong, as is a great camail,⁵
 Ne suff'reth not that men do you offence.
 And slender wivës, feeble as in battail,
 Be eager as is a tiger yond' in Ind;
 Aye clappeth as a mill, I you counsail.

Ne dread them not, do them no reverence,
 For though thine husband armed be in mail,
 The arrows of thy crabbed eloquence

¹ Counter-
tally.
² Befooled.
³ Helm.

⁴ Wives of
rank.
⁵ Camel.

¹ Forepart
of ar-
mour.² Advise.Shall pierce his breast, and eke his aventail:¹ 9080In jealousy I rede² eke thou him bind,

And thou shalt make him couch as doth a quail.

If thou be fair, there folk be in presence

Shew thou thy visage, and thine apparail:

If thou be foul, be free of thy dispense;

To get thee friendës aye do thy travail:

³ Lime-
tree.Be aye of cheer as light as leaf on lind,³

And let him care, and weep, and wring, and wail.

115
27
32

THE MERCHANT'S PROLOGUE.

‘WEeping and wailing, care and other sorrow 9089
 I have enough, on even and on morrow,’
 Quod the Merchánt, ‘and so have other mo,
 That wedded be; I trow that it be so:
 For well I wot it fareth so by me.

I have a wife, the worstë that may be,
 For though the fiend to her ycoupled were,
 She would him overmatch, I dare well swear.
 What should I you rehearse in special
 Her high malíce? she is a shrew at all.

‘There is a long and a large differéce
 Betwixt Grisilda’s greatë patiéce, } 9100
 And of my wife the passing cruelty.
 Were I unbounden, all so may I the,¹
 I wouldë never eft² come in the snare.

We wedded men live in sorrow and care,
 Assay it whoso will, and he shall find
 That I say sooth, by Saint Thomas of Ind,
 As for the morë part, I say not all;
 God shieldë³ that it shouldë so befall.

‘Ah! good Sir Host, I have ywedded be
 These moneths two, and morë not pardie; 9110
 And yet I trow that he, that all his life

¹ Thrive.² Again.³ Forbid.

¹ Thrust
through.

Wifeless hath been, though that men would him rife¹
Into the heart, ne could in no mannere
Tellen so much sorrów, as I you here
Could tellen of my wifë's cursedness.'

9113

'Now,' quod our Host, 'Merchant, so God you
Since ye so muchel knowen of that art, [bless,
Full heartily I pray you tell us part.'

'Gladly,' quod he, 'but of mine owen sore
For sorry heart I tellen may no more.'

9120

THE MERCHANT'S TALE.

WHILOM there was dwelling in Lombardy
A worthy knight, that born was at Pavie,
In which he lived in great prosperity;
And sixty year a wifeless man was he,
And follow'd aye his bodily delight
On women, there as was his appetite,
As do these foolës that be seculere.²

² Of the
laity.

And when that he was passed sixty year,
Were it for holiness or for dotáge,

³ Inclina-
tion.

I cannot say, but such a great couráge³
Haddë this knight to be a wedded man,
That day and night he doth all that he can
T' espien where that he might wedded be;
Praying our Lord to granten him, that he
Mightë once knowen of that blissful life,
That is betwixt an husband and his wife,
And for to live under that holy bond,
With which God firstë man and woman bond.
'None other life (said he) is worth a bean;
For wedlock is so easy and so clean,

9130

9140

That in this world it is a paradise.⁷
 Thus saith this oldē knight, that was so wise.

9141

¹ True.

And certainly, as sooth¹ as God is king,
 To take a wife, it is a glorious thing,
 And namely when a man is old and hoar,
 Then is a wife the fruit of his treasór;
 Then should he take a young wife and a fair,
 On which he might engender him an heir,
 And lead his life in joy and in solas,²
 Whereas these bachēlors singen Alas!
 When that they find any adversity
 In love, which n'is but childish vanity.

² Mirth.

9150

³ Becomes.

And truēly it sit³ well to be so,
 That bachēlors have often pain and woe:
 On brittle ground they build, and brittleness
 They finden, when they weenen⁴ sikerness:⁵
 They live but as a bird or as a best,⁶

⁴ Think.⁵ Security.⁶ Beast.

In liberty and under no arrest,
 Thereas⁷ a wedded man in his estate
 Liveth a life blissful and ordinate,

⁷ Whereas.

9160

Under the yoke of marriage ybound:
 Well may his heart in joy and bliss abound.
 For who can be so buxom⁸ as a wife?

⁸ Obedient.

Who is so true and eke so áttentive
 To keep him, sick and whole, as is his make?⁹
 For weal or woe she n'll him not forsake:
 She n'is not weary him to love and serve,
 Though that he lie bedrid till that he sterve.¹⁰

⁹ Mate.¹⁰ Die.

And yet some clerkēs say, it is not so,
 Of which he, Theophrast, is one of tho:¹¹
 What force¹² though Theophrast list for to lie?

9170

¹¹ Those.¹² What matter.¹³ Thrift.

'Ne take no wife,' quod he, 'for husbandry,¹³
 As for to spare in household thy dispense:
 A truē servant doth more diligence

Thy good to keep, than doth thine owen wife, 9175
For she will claimen half part all her life.

And if that thou be sick, so God me save,

¹ Servant.

Thy very friendës or a truë knave¹

² Better.

Will keep thee bet² than she, that waiteth aye
After thy good, and hath done many a day.' 9180

This sentence, and an hundred thingës worse
Writeth this man, there God his bonës curse.

³ Notice.

But take no keep³ of all such vanity,
Defieth Theophrast, and heark'neth me.

A wife is Goddë's giftë verily;

All other manner giftës hardily,

⁴ Common.

As landës, rentës, pasture, or commune,⁴

⁵ Move-
ables.

Or mebles,⁵ all be giftës of fortune,

That passen as a shadow on the wall :

⁶ Doubt.

But drede⁶ thou not, if plainly speak I shall, 9190

A wife will last and in thine house endure,

Well longer than thee list paraventure.

Marriage is a full great sacrament;

⁷ Ruined.

He which that hath no wife I hold him shent;⁷

He liveth helpless, and all desolate,

(I speak of folk in secular estate:)

And heark'neth why, I say not this for nought,

That woman is for mannë's help ywrought.

The highë God, when he had Adam maked,

And saw him all alone belly naked, 9200

⁸ Then.

God of his greatë goodness saidë than,⁸

Let us now make an help unto this man

Like to himself; and then he made him Eve.

⁹ Prove.

Here may ye see, and hereby may ye prove,⁹

That a wife is man's help and his comfort,

His paradise terrestre and his disport:

¹⁰ Yield-
ing.

So buxom¹⁰ and so virtuous is she,

They musten needës live in unity:

One flesh they be, and one flesh, as I guess, 9209
Hath but one heart in weal and in distress.

A wife? Ah! Saintë Mary, *benedicite*,
How might a man have any' adversity
That hath a wife? certes I cannot sey.¹
The bliss the which that is betwixt them tway
There may no tonguë tell or heartë think.
If he be poor, she helpeth him to swink;²
She keep'th his good, and wasteth never a del;³
All that her husband doth, her liketh well;
She saith not onës Nay, when he saith Ye;⁴
'Do this,' saith he; 'All ready, Sir,' saith she. 9220

¹ See.² Labour.³ Whit.⁴ Yea.⁵ Holdeth.⁶ Security.⁷ Advice.⁸ Advise.⁹ Blessing.

O blissful order, O wedlock precious,
Thou art so merry, and eke so virtuous,
And so commended, and approved eke,
That every man that holt⁵ him worth a leek,
Upon his barë knees ought all his life
Thanken his God, that him hath sent a wife,
Or ellës pray to God him for to send
A wife, to last unto his life's end.
For then his life is set in sikerness,⁶
He may not be deceivéd, as I guess, 9230
So that he work after his wife's rede;⁷
Then may he boldly bearen up his head,
They be so true, and therewithal so wise.
For which, if thou wilt worken as the wise,
Do alway so, as women will thee rede.⁸

Lo how that Jacob, as these clerkës read,
By good counsél of his mother Rebec'
Boundë the kiddë's skin about his neck;
For which his father's benison⁹ he wan.

Lo Judith, as the story eke tell can, 9240
By good counsél she Goddë's people kept,
And slew him, Holofernes, while he slept.

Lo Abigail, by good counsél how she
 Savéd her husband Nabal, when that he
 Should have been slain. And look, Hestér also
 By good counsel delivered out of woe
 The people of God, and made him, Mardochee
 Of Assuere enhancéd for to be.

9243

¹ Satisfaction.

There n'is no thing in gree¹ superlative
 (As saith Senec) above an humble wife.

9250

² Biddeth.

Suffer thy wifë's tongue, as Caton bit,²
 She shall command, and thou shalt suffer it,
 And yet she will obey of courtesy.

A wife is keeper of thine husbandry:
 Well may the sickë man bewail and weep,
 There as there is no wife the house to keep.
 I warnë thee, if wisely thou wilt werche,³
 Love well thy wife, as Christ lovéth his cherche:
 If thou lovést thyself, love thou thy wife.

³ Work.

No man hatéth his flesh, but in his life

9260

He fost'reth it, and therefore bid I thee

⁴ Thrive.

Cherish thy wife, or thou shalt never the.⁴

⁵ Mock.

Husband and wife, what so men jape⁵ or play,

⁶ Sure.

Of worldly folk holden the siker⁶ way:

They be so knit, there may no harm betide,
 And namëly upon the wifë's side.

For which this January, of whom I told,
 Considered hath within his dayës old
 The lusty life, the virtuous quiet,
 That is in marriagë honey-sweet.

9270

And for his friendës on a day he sent
 To tellen them th' effect of his intent.

⁷ Serious.

With facë sad,⁷ his tale he hath them told:
 He saidë, 'Friendës, I am hoar and old,
 And almost (God wot) on my pittë's brink,
 Upon my soulë somewhat must I think.

<p>I have my body folily¹ dispended, Blessed be God that it shall be amended: For I will be certáin a wedded man, And that anon in all the haste I can. Unto some maiden, fair and tender of age, I pray you shapeth² for my marriage All suddenly, for I will not abide: And I will fonde³ t' espien on my side, To whom I may be wedded hastily. But forasmuch as ye be more than I, Ye shallen rather such a thing espien Than I, and where me bestë were t' allien.</p>	<p>9277</p>	<p>¹ Foolishly.</p>
<p>‘But one thing warn I you, my friendës dear, I will none old wife have in no mannere: She shall not passen twenty year certáin. Old fish and youngë flesh would I have fain. Bet⁴ is (quod he) a pike than a pikerel,⁵ And bet than old beef is the tender veal. I will no woman thirty year of age, It is but beanëstraw and great foráge. And eke these oldë widows (God it wote) They connen⁶ so much craft on Wadës boat, So muchel broken harm when that them lest,⁷ That with them should I never live in rest. For sundry schoolës maken subtile clerkës; Woman of many schoolës half a clerk is. But certainly, a young thing men may gie,⁸ Right as men may warm wax with handës plie.⁹ Wherefore I say you plainly in a clause, I will none old wife have right for this cause.</p>	<p>9290</p> <p>9300</p>	<p>² Prepare.</p> <p>³ Try.</p> <p>⁴ Better. ⁵ Young pike.</p> <p>⁶ Know. ⁷ Please.</p> <p>⁸ Guide. ⁹ Mould.</p>
<p>‘For if so were I haddë such mischance, That I in her ne could have no pleasance, Then should I lead my life in avoutrie, And so straight to the devil when I die.</p>	<p>9310</p>	

¹ Rather.

Ne children should I none upon her gotten: 9311

Yet were me lever¹ houndës had me eaten,

Than that mine heritagë shouldë fall

In strangë hands: and this I tell you all.

I doatë not; I wot the causë why

Men shouldeñ wed: and furthermore wot I,

There speaketh many a man of marriáge,

That wot no more of it than wot my page,

For which causes a man should take a wife.

If he ne may not liven chaste his life,

Take him a wife with great devotiön,

Because of lawful procreatiön

Of children, to th' honoür of God above,

And not only for paramour or love;

And for they shouldeñ lechery eschew,

And yield their debtë when that it is due:

Or for that each of them should helpen other

In mischief, as a sister shall the brother,

And live in chastity full holily.

'But, Sirës, (by your leave,) that am not I, 9320

For God be thanked, I dare make avaunt,

I feel my limbës stark and suffisant

To do all that a man belongeth to:

I wot myselven best what I may do.

Though I be hoar, I fare as doth a tree,

That bloometh ere the fruit ywoxen be;

The bloomy tree n'is neither dry nor dead:

I feel me nowhere hoar but on my head.

Mine heart and all my limbës be as green,

As laurel through the year is for to seen.

And since that ye have heard all mine intent,

I pray you to my will ye would assent.'

Diversë men diversëly him told

Of marriagë many' ensamples old;

Some blamed it, some praised it certain; 9345
 But attē lastē, shortly for to sayn,
 (As all day falleth altercatión
 Betwixen friendēs in disputison¹)
 There fell a strife betwixt his brethren two,
 Of which that one was cleped Placebo, 9350
 Justinus soothly called was that other.

Placebo said; 'O January brother,
 Full little need have ye, my lord so dear,
 Counsel to ask of any that is here:
 But that yē be so full of sapiēce,
 That you ne liketh for your high prudēce,
 To weiven² from the word of Solomon. 9360
 This word said he unto us every one;
 Work allē thing by counsel, thus said he,
 And then ne shalt thou not repentē thee.
 But though that Solomon spake such a word,
 Mine owen dearē brother and my lord,
 So wisly³ God my soulē bring at rest,
 I hold your owen counsel is the best. 9370

'For, brother mine, take of me this motive,
 I have now been a court-man all my life,
 And God it wot, though I unworthy be,
 I havē standen in full great degree
 Aboutē lordēs of full high estate:
 Yet had I never with none of them debate, 9370
 I never them contraried truēly.
 I wot well that my lord can⁴ more than I;
 What that he saith, I hold it firm and stable,
 I say the same, or ellēs thing semblable.
 A full great fool is any counsellor,
 That serveth any lord of high honour,
 That dare presume, or onēs thinken it,
 That his counsēl should pass his lordē's wit.

¹ Dispute.² Depart.³ Certainly.⁴ Knows.

	Nay, lordës be no foolës, by my fay.	9379
	Ye have yourselven shewed here to-day	
¹ Judg- ment.	So high sentence, ¹ so holily, and well,	
	That I consent, and confirm every deal	
	Your wordës all, and your opinioun.	
	By God, there n'is no man in all this town	
² Better.	Ne in Itailë, could bet ² have ysaid:	
³ Holdeth.	Christ holt ³ him of this counsel well apaid. ⁴	
⁴ Satisfied.	And truëly it is an high couráge	
	Of any man that stopen ⁵ is in age,	
⁵ Advanc- ed.	To take a young wife, by my father kin;	
	Your heartë hangeth on a jolly pin.	9390
	‘Do now in this mattér right as you lest,	
	For finally I hold it for the best.’	
	Justinus, that aye stillë sat and heard,	
	Right in this wise he to Placeb’ answér’d.	
	‘Now, brother mine, be patiént I pray,	
	Since ye have said, and heark’neth what I say.	
	‘Senec among his other wordës wise	
⁶ Consider.	Saith, that a man ought him right well avise, ⁶	
	To whom he giveth his land or his chattel.	
	And since I ought avisen me right well,	9400
	To whom I give my good away from me,	
	Well more I ought avisen me, pardie,	
	To whom I give my body: for alway	
	I warn you well it is no childë’s play	
	To take a wife without avisëment.	
	Men must inquiren (this is mine assent)	
⁷ Given to drink.	Whether shë be wise and sober, or dronkelew, ⁷	
	Or proud, or ellës other ways a shrew,	
⁸ A scold.	A chidester, ⁸ or a waster of thy good,	
⁹ Mad.	Or rich or poor, or else a man is wood. ⁹	9410
	All be it so, that no man finden shall	
	None in this world, that trotteth whole in all,	

Nor man, nor beast, such as men can devise,	9413	
But nathëless it ought enough suffice		
With any wife, if so were that she had		
More goodë thewës, ¹ than her vices bad:		¹ Qualities.
And all this asketh leisure to inquire.		
For God it wot, I have wept many a tear		
Full privily, since that I had a wife.		
Praise whoso will a wedded mannë's life,	9420	
Certaïn I find in it but cost and care,		
And observánces of all blisses bare.		
And yet, God wot, my neighëbours about,		
And namëly of women many a rout,		
Say that I have the mostë steadfast wife,		
And eke the meekest one that beareth life.		
But I wot best, where wringeth me my shoe.		
Ye may for me right as you liketh do.		
Aviseth you, ye be a man of age,		
How that ye enter into marriáge;	9430	
And namely with a young wife and a fair.		
By him that made watër, fire, earth, and air,		
The youngest man, that is in all this rout, ²		² Company.
Is busy enough to bringen it about		
To have his wife alonë, trusteth me:		
Ye shall not pleasen her fully years three,		
This is to say, to do her full pleasánce.		
A wife asketh full many an observánce.		
I pray you that ye be not evil apaid. ³		³ Displeas- ed.
‘Well,’ quod this January, ‘and hast thou said?		
Straw for Senec, and straw for thy proverbs,	9441	
I countë not a pannier full of herbs		
Of schoolë termës; wiser men than thou,		
As thou hast heard, assented here right now		
To my purpose: Placebo, what say ye?’		
‘I say it is a cursed ⁴ man,’ quod he,		⁴ Ill-natur- ed.

¹ Hinder-
eth.² Surely.‘That letteth¹ matrimony sikerly.’²

9447

And with that word they risen suddenly,
 And been assented fully, that he should
 Be wedded when him list, and where he would.

High fantasy and curious business

³ Crowd.

From day to day ’gan in the soul empress³
 Of January about his marriage.

Many a fair shape, and many a fair visage
 There passeth through his heartē night by night.

As whoso took a mirror polish’d bright,

And set it in a common market-place,

Then should he see many a figure pace

By his mirrór, and in the samē wise

’Gan January in with his thought devise

9460

Of maidens, which that dwelten him beside :

He wistē not where that he might abide.

For if that one have beauty in her face,

Another stood so in the people’s grace

⁴ Sedate-
ness.

For her sadness⁴ and her benignity,

That of the people the greatest voice hath she :

And some were rich and hadden a bad name.

But nathēless, betwixt earnest and game,

He at the last appointed him on one,

And let all other from his heartē gon,

9470

And chose her of his own authority,

For love is blind all day, and may not see.

And when that he was in his bed ybrought,

He portray’d in his heart and in his thought

Her freshē beauty, and her agē tender,

Her middle small, her armēs long and slender,

Her wisē governance, her gentleness,

Her womanly bearing, and her sadnéss.

And when that he on her was condescended,

Him thought his choice it might not be amended ; 9480

For when that he himself concluded had,
 Him thought each other manné's wit so bad,
 That impossible it werë to reply
 Against his choice; this was his fantasy.

9481

His friendës sent he to, at his instáncë,
 And prayed them to do him that pleasáncë,
 That hastily they woulden to him come;
 He would abridge their labour all and some:
 Needed no more to them to go nor ride,
 He was appointed there¹ he would abide.

9490 ¹ Where.

Placebo came, and eke his friendës soon,
 And alderfirst² he bade them all a boon,*
 That none of them no argumentës make
 Against the purpose that he hath ytake:
 Which purpose was pleasánt to God (said he)
 And very ground of his prosperity.

² First of
all.

He said, 'There was a maiden in the town,
 Which that of beauty haddë great renown,
 All³ were it so, she were of small degree,
 Sufficeth him her youth and her beauty:
 Which maid (he said) he would have to his wife
 To lead in ease and holiness his life:

9500

³ Al-
though.

And thanked God, that he might have her all,
 That no wight with his blissë parten shall:
 And prayed them to labour in this need,
 And shapen that he faillë not to speed.
 For then (he said) his spirit was at ease;
 Then is (quod he) nothing may me displease,
 Save one thing pricketh in my conscience,
 The which I will rehearse in your presence.

9510

'I have (quod he) heard said full yore⁴ ago,
 There may no man have perfect blissës two,
 This is to say, in earth and eke in heaven.

⁴ Long.

* 'Bade them all a boon:' Made a request of them all.

¹ That.	For though he keep him from the sinnës seven, And eke from every branch of thilkë ¹ tree,	9515
² Pleasure.	Yet is there so perfect felicity, And so great ease and lust ² in marriage, That ever I am aghast now in mine age, That I shall leaden now so merry a life, So delicate, withouten woe or strife,	9520
	That I shall have mine heaven in earthë here. For since that very heaven is bought so dear With tribulatiön and great penáncë, How should I then, living in such pleasáncë As allë wedded men do with their wivës, Come to the bliss, there Christ etern on live is? This is my dread, and ye, my brethren tway,	
³ Clear.	Assoileth ³ me this questiön I pray.'	
	Justinus, which that hated his follý,	
⁴ Mockery.	Answér'd anon right in his japery; ⁴ And for he would his longë tale abridge, He wouldë no authority allege, But saidë, 'Sir, so there be none obstácle Other than this, God of his high mirácle, And of his mercy, may so for you werche, ⁵ That ere ye have your rites of holy cherche, ⁶ Ye may repent of wedded mannë's life, In which ye say there is no woe nor strife: And ellës God forbid, but if he sent A wedded man his grace him to repent Well often, rather than a single man.	9530
⁵ Work.	And therefore, Sir, the best rede ⁷ that I can,	
⁶ Church.	Despair you not, but haveth in memory, Paráventure she may be your purgatory; She may be Goddë's mean and Goddë's whip; Then shall your soul up unto heaven skip Swifter than doth an arrow of a bow.	9540
⁷ Advice.		

I hope to God hereafter ye shall know, 9548
 That there n'is no so great felicity
 In marriage, ne never more shall be,
 That you shall let¹ of your salvatiön,
 So that ye use, as skill is and reasön,
 The lustës of your wife attemprely,²
 And that ye please her not too amorously:
 And that ye keep you eke from other sin.
 My tale is done, for my wit is but thin.
 Be not aghast hereof, my brother dear,
 But let us waden out of this mattére.
 The wife of Bath, if ye have understand,
 Of marriage, which ye now have in hand, 9560
 Declared hath full well in little space:
 Fareth now well, God have you in his grace.'

¹ Hinder.² Tempe-
rately.

And with this word this Justine and his brother
 Have take their leave, and each of them of other.
 And when they saw that it must needës be,
 They wroughten so by sleight and wise treaty,
 That she, this maiden, which that Maius hight,³
 And hastily as ever that she might,
 Shall wedded be unto this January.

³ Called.

I trow it were too longë you to tarry, 9570
 If I told you of every script⁴ and band,
 By which that she was feoff'd in his land;
 Or for to reckon of her rich array.
 But finally ycomen is the day,
 That to the churchë bothë been they went,
 For to receive the holy sacrament.
 Forth cometh the priest, with stole about his
 neck,

⁴ Writing.

And bade her be like Sarah and Rebec',
 In wisdom and in truth of marriage:
 And said his orisons, as is uságe,

9580

¹ Crossed.

And crouched¹ them, and bade God should them
bless,

9581

² Sure.

And made all siker² enough with holiness.

Thus be they wedded with solemnity;

And at the feastē sitteth he and she

With other worthy folk upon the dais.

All full of joy and bliss is the palāce,

And full of instruments, and of vitaïlle,

The mostē dainteous of all Itaïlle.

Before them stood such instruments of soun,

That Orpheus, nor of Thebes Amphion,

9590

Ne maden never such a melody.

At every course in came loud minstrelsy,

That never Joab trumped for to hear,

Ne he, Theodomas, yet half so clear

At Thebes, when the city was in doubt.

³ Pours
out.

Bacchus the wine them skinketh³ all about,

And Venus laugheth upon every wight,

(For January was become her knight,

And wouldē both assayen his courāge

In liberty, and eke in marriage,)

9600

And with her firebrand in her hand about

Danceth before the bride and all the rout.

And certainly I dare right well say this,

Hymeneus, that God of wedding is,

Saw never his life so merry a wedded man.

Hold thou thy peace, thou poet Marcian,

That writest us that ilkē wedding merry

Of her Philologie and him Mercury,

And of the songēs that the Muses sung:

Too small is both thy pen and eke thy tongue 9610

For to describen of this marriage.

When tender youth hath wedded stooping age,

There is such mirth that it may not be written;

Assayeth it yourself, then may ye witten¹
If that I lie or no in this mattére.

9614 ¹ Know.

Maius, that sits with so benign a chere,²
Her to behold it seemed faërie,
Queen Hester looked never with such an eye
On Assuere, so meek a look hath she,
I may you not devise all her beauty;
But thus much of her beauty tell I may,
That she was like the brightë morrow of May
Fulfilled of all beauty and pleasance.

² Mien.

9620

This January is ravish'd in a trance,
At every time he looketh in her face,
But in his heart he 'gan her to menace,
That he that night in armës would her strain
Harder than ever Paris did Helene.

But nathëless yet had he great pity
That thilkë night offenden her must he,
And thought, Alas, O tender créature,
Now wouldë God ye mighten well endure
All my courage, it is so sharp and keen;
I am aghast ye shall it not sustene.

9630

But God forbid, that I did all my might.
Now wouldë God that it were waxen night,
And that the night would lasten evermo.
I would that all this people were ago.

And finally he doth all his labóur,
As he best mightë, saving his honóur,
To haste them from the meat in subtle wise.

9640

The timë came that reason was to rise;
And after that men dance, and drinken fast,
And spices all about the house they cast,
And full of joy and bliss is every man,
All but a squire, that hightë Damian,
Which carved before the knight full many a day:

¹ Mad.

He was so ravish'd on his lady May,

9648

² Fainted.

That for the very pain he was nigh wood;¹

Almost he swelt,² and swooned there he stood:

So sore hath Venus hurt him with her brand,

As that she bare it dancing in her hand.

And to his bed he went him hastily;

No more of him as at this time speak I;

³ Com-
plain.

But there I let him weep enough and plain,³

Till freshē May will ruen on his pain.

O perilous fire, that in the bedstraw breedeth!

⁴ Domestic.

O famuler⁴ foe, that his servicē bedeth!⁵

⁵ Offers.

O servant traitor, false of holy hue,

Like to the adder in bosom sly untrue,

9660

God shield us allē from your acquaintānce!

O January, drunken in pleasance

Of marriāge, see how thy Damian,

Thine owen squier and thy boren man,

Intendeth for to do thee villainy:

⁶ At home.

God grantē thee thine homely⁶ foe to espy.

For in this world n'is worsē pestilence,

Than homely foe, all day in thy présence.

⁷ Daily.

Performed hath the sun his arc diurn,⁷

No longer may the body of him sojourn

9670

On the horizon, as in that latitude:

Night with his mantle, that is dark and rude,

'Gan overspread the hemisphere about:

⁸ Pleasant
company.

For which departed is this lusty rout⁸

From January, with thank on every side.

Home to their houses lustily they ride,

Thereas they do their thingēs, as them lest,

And when they saw their timē, go to rest.

Soon after that this hasty January

⁹ Spiced
wine.

Will go to bed, he will no longer tarry.

9680

He drinketh hippocras, clarre,⁹ and vernage

Of spices hot, t' increasen his courage: 9682
 And many a 'lectuary had he full fine,
 Such as the cursed monk Dan Constantine
 Hath written in his book *de Coitu*;
 To eat them all he wouldë nothing eschew:
 And to his privy friendës thus said he:

'For Goddë's love, as soon as it may be,
 Let voiden all this house in courteous wise.'
 And they have done right as he will devise. 9690

Men drinken, and the travers¹ draw anon;
 The bride is brought a-bed as still as stone;
 And when the bed was with the priest ybless'd,
 Out of the chamber hath every wight him dress'd,
 And January hath fast in armës take

His freshë May, his paradise, his make.² 9700

He lulleth her, he kisseth her full oft;
 With thickë bristles of his beard unsoft,
 Like to the skin of houndfish, sharp as brere,
 (For he was shave all new in his mannëre,) 9700

He rubbeth her upon her tender face,
 And saidë thus; 'Alas! I must trespass
 To you, my spouse, and you greatly offend,
 Or timë come that I will down descend.

But nathëless considereth this, (quod he,)
 There n'is no workman, whatsoever he be,
 That may both worken well and hastily:
 This will be done at leisure perfectly.

It is no force³ how longë that we play:
 In truë wedlock coupled be we tway; 9710
 And blessed be the yoke that we be in,
 For in our actës may there be no sin.

A man may do no sinnë with his wife,
 Ne hurt himselven with his owen knife:
 For we have leave to play us by the law.'

¹ Servants.

² Mate.

³ No matter.

Thus laboureth he, till that the day 'gan daw,
 And then he tak'th a sop in fine clarrë, 9717
 And upright in his bed then sitteth he.
 And after that he sang full loud and clear,
 And kiss'd his wife, and maketh wanton cheer.

¹ Wanton-
ness.

He was all coltish, full of ragerie,¹
 And full of jargon, as a flecked pie.
 The slackë skin about his neckë shaketh,
 While that he sang, so chanteth he and craketh.
 But God wot what that May thought in her heart,
 When she him saw up sitting in his shirt
 In his night-cap, and with his neckë lean:
 She praiseth not his playing worth a bean.
 Then said he thus; 'My restë will I take
 Now day is come, I may no longer wake;' 9730
 And down he laid his head and slept till prime.
 And afterward, when that he saw his time,
 Up riseth January, but freshë May
 Held her in chamber till the fourthë day,
 As usage is of wivës for the best.
 For every labour sometime must have rest,
 Or ellës longë may he not endure;
 This is to say, no livës créature,
 Be it of fish, or bird, or beast, or man.

Now will I speak of woful Damian, 9740
 That languisheth for love, as ye shall hear;
 Therefore I speak to him in this mannëre.
 I say, O silly Damian, alas!

Answér to this demand, as in this case,
 How shalt thou to thy lady freshë May
 Tellen thy woe? She will alway say nay;
² Discover. Eke if thou speak, she will thy woe bewrein;²
³ See. God be thine help, I can no better sein.³

This sickë Damian in Venus' fire

So burneth, that he dieth for desire; 9750
 For which he put his life in áventure,
 No longer might he in this wise endure,
 But privily a penner¹ 'gan he borrow,
 And in a letter wrote he all his sorrow,
 In manner of a complaínt or a lay,
 Unto his fairë freshë lady May.
 And in a purse of silk, hung on his shirt,
 He hath it put, and laid it at his heart.

¹ Pen-case.

The moonë that at noon was thilkë² day 9760
 That January hath wedded freshë May
 In ten of Taure, was into Cancer gliden;
 So long hath Maius in her chamber abiden,
 As custom is unto these nobles all.
 A bridë shall not eaten in the hall,
 Till dayës four or three days at the least
 Ypassed been, then let her go to feast.
 The fourthë day complete from noon to noon,
 When that the highë massë was ydone,
 In hallë sat this January and May,
 As fresh as is the brightë summer's day. 9770
 And so befell, how that this goodë man
 Remember'd him upon this Damian,
 And saidë; 'Saint Marý, how may it be,
 That Damian attendeth not to me?
 Is he aye sick? or how may this betide?'

² That.

His squiers, which that stoodden there beside,
 Excused him, because of his sickness,
 Which letted³ him to do his business:
 None other causë mightë make him tarry.

³ Hindered.

'That me forthinketh,'⁴ quod this January; 9780
 'He is a gentle squier, by my truth;
 If that he died, it were great harm and ruth.
 He is as wise, discreet, and as secree,

⁴ Grieves.

As any man I wot of his degree, 9784
 And thereto manly and eke serviceable,
 And for to be a thrifty man right able.

But after meat as soon as ever I may
 I will myself visit him, and eke May,
 To do him all the comfort that I can.'

And for that word him blessed every man, 9790
 That of his bounty and his gentleness

He wouldē so comfórtē in sickness

His squier, for it was a gentle deed.

'Dame,' quod this January, 'take good heed,

At after meat, ye with your women all,

(When that ye be in chamber out of this hall,)

That all ye go to see this Damian:

Do him disport, he is a gentleman,

And telleth him that I will him visit,

¹ Little. Have I no thing but rested me a lite:¹ 9800

And speed you fastē, for I will abide

Till that ye sleepen fastē by my side.'

And with that word he 'gan unto him call

A squier, that was marshall of his hall,

And told him certain thingēs that he wold.

This freshē May hath straight her way yhold

With all her women unto Damian.

Down by his beddē's sidē sits she than,

Comforting him as goodly as she may.

² Saw. This Damian, when that his time he say,² 9810

In secret wise, his purse, and eke his bill,

In which that he ywritten had his will,

Hath put into her hand withouten more,

Save that he sighed wonder deep and sore,

And softēly to her right thus said he;

'Mercy, and that ye not discover me:

For I am dead, if that this thing be kid.'³

³ Discover-
ed.

This purse hath she in with her bosom hid, 9818
 And went her way; ye get no more of me;
 But unto January ycome is she,
 That on his beddē's sidē sat full soft.
 He taketh her, and kisseth her full oft:
 And laid him down to sleep, and that anon.
 She feigned her, as that she mustē gon
 Thereas ye wot that every wight must need;
 And when she of this bill hath taken heed,
 She rent it all to cloutēs at the last,
 And in the privy softēly it cast.

Who studieth now but fairē freshē May?
 Adown by oldē January she lay, 9830
 That sleptē, till the cough hath him awaked:
 Anon he pray'd her strippen her all naked,
 He would of her, he said, have some pleasānce;
 And said, her clothēs did him incumbrance.
 And she obey'th him, be her lefe¹ or loth.
 But lest that precious² folk be with me wroth,
 How that he wrought, I dare not to you tell,
 Or whether her thought it paradise or hell;
 But there I let them worken in their wise
 Till evesong rang, and that they must arise. 9840

Were it by destiny, or aventüre,
 Were it by influence, or by natüre,
 Or constellation, that in such estate
 The heaven stood at that time fortunate,
 As for to put a bill of Venus' werkēs
 (For allē thing hath time, as say these clerkēs,)
 To any woman for to get her love,
 I cannot say, but greatē God above,
 That knoweth that none act is causēless,
 He deem of all, for I will hold my peace. 9850
 But sooth is this, how that this freshē May

¹ Willing.² Precise.

Hath taken such impressi3n that day 9852
 Of pity on this sick3 Damian,
 That from her heart3 she ne driven can
 The remembr3nc3 for to do him ease.
 'Certain (thought she) whom that this thing displease
 I reck3 not, for here I him assure,
 To love him best of any creat3re,
 Though he no mor3 hadd3 than his shert.'

Lo, pity runneth soon in gentle heart. 9860
 Here may ye see, how excellent franchise¹
 In women is when they them narrow avise.*
 Some tyrant is, as there be many one,
 That hath an heart as hard as any stone,
 Which would have let him sterven² in the place
 Well rather than have granted him her grace:
 And them rejoicen in their cruel pride,
 And reckon not to be an homicide.

This gentle May, fulfilled of pity,
 Right of her hand a letter maketh she, 9870
 In which she granteth him her very grace;
 There lacked nought, but only day and place,
 Where that she might unto his lust suffice:
 For it shall be, right as he will devise.

And when she saw her time upon a day
 To visiten this Damian go'th this May,
 And subtilly this letter down she threst
 Under his pillow, read it if him lest.
 She tak'th him by the hand, and hard him twist
 So secretly, that no wight of it wist, 9880
 And bade him be all whole; and forth she went
 To January, when he for her sent.

Up riseth Damian the next3 morrow,
 All passed was his sickness and his sorrow.

* 'When they them narrow avise:' When they closely consider.

¹ Generosity.

² Die.

He combeth him, he proineth¹ him and picketh,
He doth all that his lady list and liketh;

9886

¹ Trim-
meth.

And eke to January he go'th as low,
As ever did a doggë for the bow.

He is so pleasant unto every man,
(For craft is all, whoso that do it can,)
That every wight is fain to speak him good;
And fully in his lady's grace he stood.

Thus let I Damian about his need,
And in my talë forth I will proceed.

Some clerkës holden that felicity
Stands in delight, and therefore certain he,
This noble January, with all his might
In honest wise as 'longeth to a knight,
Shope² him to liven full deliciously:

² Shaped.

His housing, his array, as honestly³
To his degree was maked as a king's.

9900

³ Honour-
ably.

Amongës other of his honest things
He had a garden walled all with stone,
So fair a garden wot I nowhere none.
For out of doubt I verily suppose,
That he that wrote the Romance of the Rose,
Ne could of it the beauty well devise:

Ne Priapus ne mightë not suffice,
Though he be god of gardens, for to tell
The beauty of the garden, and the well,
That stood under a laurel alway green.

9910

Full often time he, Pluto, and his queen,
Proserpina, and allë their faerie,
Disporten them and maken melody
About that well, and danced, as men told.

This noble knight, this January the old,
Such dainty hath in it to walk and pley,
That he will suffer no wight bear the key,

¹ Key.

Save he himself, for of the small wicket 9919

He bare alway of silver a eliket,¹

With which when that him list he it unshet.

And when that he would pay his wife's debt

In summer season thither would he go,

And May his wife, and no wight but they two;

And thinges which that were not done a-bed,

He in the garden performed them and sped.

And in this wisē many a merry day

Lived this January and freshē May,

But worldly joy may not alway endure

To January, nor to no creatūre.

9930

O sudden hap, O thou fortune unstable,

Like to the scorpion so deceivable,

That flatt'rest with thy head when thou wilt sting;

Thy tail is death, through thine envenoming.

² Strange.

O brittle joy, O sweetē poison quaint,²

O monster, that so subtilly canst paint

Thy giftēs, under hue of steadfastness,

That thou deceivest bothē more and less,

Why hast thou January thus deceived,

That haddest him for thy full friend received?

9940

And now thou hast bereft him both his eyen,

For sorrow of which desireth he to dien.

³ Pleasure.

Alas! this noble January free,

Amid his lust³ and his prosperity

Is waxen blind, and that all suddenly.

He weepeth and he waileth piteously;

And therewithal, the fire of jealousy

(Lest that his wife should fall in some folly)

So burnt his heartē, that he wouldē fain,

That some man had both him and her yslain;

9950

For neither after his death, nor in his life,

Ne would he that she were no love nor wife,

But ever live as a widow in clothes blake,
Sole as the turtle that hath lost her make.¹

9953

¹ Mate.

But at the last, after a month or tway,
His sorrow 'gan assuagen, sooth to say.
For when he wist it might none other be,
He patiently took his adversity:

Save out of doubt he ne may not forgon,
That he n'as jealous ever more in one:

9960

Which jealousy it was so outrageouſ,
That neither in hall, ne in none other house,
Ne in none other placē never the mo
He n'oldē suffer her for to ride or go,
But if that he had hand on her alway.

For which full often weepeth freshē May,

That loveth Damian so burningly,
That she must either dien suddenly,

Or ellēs she must have him as her lest:²

² Please.

She waited³ when her heartē would to-brest.⁴

9970

³ Expect-
ed.⁴ Burst.

Upon that other sidē Damian

Becomen is the sorrowfullest man

That ever was, for neither night nor day

Ne might he speak a word to freshē May,

As to his purpose of no such mattére,

But if that January must it hear,

That had an hand upon her evermo.

But nathēless, by writing to and fro,

And privy signēs, wist he what she meant,

And she knew eke the fine⁵ of his intent.

9980

⁵ End.

O January, what might it thee avail,

Though thou might see as far as shippēs sail?

For as good is blind to deceived be,

As be deceived, when a man may see.

Lo, Argus, which that had an hundred eyen,

For all that ever he could pore or pryen,

¹ Deceived.	Yet was he blent, ¹ and, God wot, so be mo,	9987
² Surely.	That weenen wisly ² that it be not so: Pass over is an ease, I say no more. This freshë May, of which I spake of yore,	
³ Key.	In warm wax hath imprinted the cliket, ³ That January bare of the small wicket, By which into his garden oft he went; And Damian, that knew all her intent, The cliket counterfeited privily; There n'is no more to say, but hastily Some wonder by this cliket shall betide, Which ye shall hearen, if ye will abide. O noble Ovíd, sooth sayest thou, God wot, What sleight is it, if love be long and hot,	10000
⁴ Learn.	By Pyramus and Thisbe may men lere; ⁴ Though they were kept full long and strait over all,	
⁵ Whispering.	They been accorded, rowning ⁵ through a wall, There no wight could have founden such a sleight. But now to purpose; ere that dayës eight	
⁶ Befell.	Were passed of the month of Juil, befill, ⁶ That January hath caught so great a will, Through egging of his wife, him for to play In his gardén, and no wight but they tway,	10010
	That in a morrow unto this May said he; 'Rise up, my wife, my love, my lady free; The turtle's voice is heard, mine owen sweet; The winter is gone, with all his rainës weet. ⁷	
⁷ Wet.		
⁸ Of a dove.	Come forth now with thine eyen columbine. ⁸ Well fairer be thy breasts than any wine. The garden is enclosed all about; Come forth, my whitë spouse, for out of doubt, Thou hast me wounded in mine heart, O wife:	
⁹ Was not.	No spot in thee n'as ⁹ never in all thy life.	10020

Come forth, and let us taken our disport, 10021
I choose thee for my wife and my comfort.'

Such oldē lewed wordēs used he.

On Damian a signē madē she,
That he should go before with his cliket.
This Damian hath opened the wicket,
And in he start, and that in such mannēre,
That no wight might him see neither yhear,
And still he sat under a bush. Anon

This January, as blind as is a stone, 10030
With Maius in his hand, and no wight mo,
Into this freshē garden is ago,
And clapped to the wicket suddenly.

'Now, wife,' quod he, 'here n'is but thou, and I,
That art the creatūre that I best love:

For by that Lord that sits in heaven above,
I haddē lever¹ dien on a knife,

¹ Rather.

Than thee offenden, dearē truē wife.

For Goddē's sakē, think how I thee chees,² 10040
Not for no covetisē doubtēless,

² Chose.

But only for the love I had to thee.

And though that I be old and may not see,

Be to me true, and I will tell you why;

Certes three thingēs shall ye win thereby;

First, love of Christ, and to yourself honour,

And all mine heritagē, town and tow'r.

I give it you, make charters as you lest:

This shall be done to-morrow ere sun rest,

So wisly³ God my soulē bring to bliss;

³ Surely.

I pray you on this cov'nant ye me kiss. 10050

And though that I be jealous, wite⁴ me nought;

⁴ Blame.

Ye be so deep imprinted in my thought,

That when that I consider your beauty,

And therewithal the unlikely eld of me,

I may not certes, though I shouldē die, 10055
 Forbear to be out of your company
 For very love; this is withouten doubt:
 Now kiss me, wife, and let us roam about.'

This freshē May, when she these wordēs heard,
 Benignely to January answer'd, 10060
 But first and forward she began to weep:
 'I have,' quod she, 'a soulē for to keep
 As well as ye, and also mine honour,
 And of my wifehood thilkē tender flow'r,
 Which that I have assured in your hond,
 When that the priest to you my body bond:
 Wherefore I will answer in this mannere,
 With leave of you, mine owen lord so dear.

'I pray to God that never dawn that day,
 That I ne sterve,¹ as foul as woman may, 10070
 If ever I do unto my kin that shame,
 Or ellēs I impairē so my name,
 That I be false; and if I do that lack,
 Do strippen me and put me in a sack,
 And in the nextē river do² me drench:³
 I am a gentlewoman, and no wench.
 Why speak ye thus? but men be ever untrue,
 And women have reproof of you aye new.

Ye con⁴ none other dalliance, I 'lieve,
 But speak to us as of untrust and reprove.'⁵ 10080

And with that word she saw where Damian
 Sat in the bush, and coughen she began;
 And with her finger a sign madē she,
 That Damian should climb up on a tree,
 That charged was with fruit, and up he went:
 For verily he knew all her intent,
 And every signē that she couldē make,
 Well bet⁶ than January her owen make.⁷

¹ Die.² Cause.³ Drown.⁴ Know.⁵ Reproof.⁶ Better.⁷ Mate.

For in a letter she had told him all 10089
 Of this mattér, how that he worken shall.
 And thus I let¹ him sitting in the pery,²
 And January and May roaming full merry.

¹ Leave.
² Pear-tree.

Bright was the day, and blue the firmament;
 Phœbus of gold his streamës down hath sent
 To gladden every flow'r with his warmness;
 He was that time in *Geminis*, I guess,
 But little from his declination
 Of Cancer, Jovë's exaltation.

And so befell in that bright morrow-tide,
 That in the garden, on the farther side, 10100
 Pluto, that is the king of Faerie,

And many a lady in his company
 Following his wife, the queen Proserpina,
 Which that he ravished out of Ethna,
 While that she gather'd flowers in the mead,
 (In Claudian ye may the story read,
 How that her in his grisly cart³ he fet,⁴)
 This king of Faerie adown him set

³ Chariot.
⁴ Fetched.

Upon a bench of turfës fresh and green,
 And right anon thus said he to his queen. 10110

'My wife,' quod he, 'there may no wight say nay,
 Th' experience so prov'th it every day,
 The treason which that woman doth to man.
 Ten hundred thousand stories tell I can
 Notable of your untruth and brittleness.

'O Solomon, richest of all richness,
 Fulfill'd of sapience, and worldly glory,
 Full worthy be thy wordës to memory
 To every wight, that wit and reason can.⁵
 Thus praiseth he the bounty⁶ yet of man; 10120
 Among a thousand men yet found I one,
 But of all women found I never none.

⁵ Knows.
⁶ Good-
 ness.

Thus saith this king, that knew your wickedness;
And Jesus, *Filius* Sirach, as I guess, 10124

He speaketh of you but seldom reverence.
A wildē fire, a corrupt pestilēce,
So fall upon your bodies yet to-night:
Ne see ye not this honourable knight?
Because, alas! that he is blind and old,
His owen man shall make him cokēwold. 10130

Lo, where he sits, the lecher, in the tree.
Now will I granten of my majesty
Unto this oldē blindē worthy knight,
That he shall have again his eyen sight,
When that his wife will do him villany;
Then shall he knowen all her harlotry,
Both in reproof of her and other mo.'

'Yea, Sir,' quod Proserpine, 'and will ye so?
Now by my mother Ceres' soul I swear,
That I shall give her suffisant answére, 10140
And allē women after for her sake;
That though they be in any guilt ytake,
With facē bold they shall themselves excuse,
And bear them down that wouldeñ them accuse.
For lack of answer, none of us shall dien,

All¹ had ye seen a thing with both your eyen,
Yet shall we so viságe² it hardily,
And weep and swear and chiden subtly,
That ye shall be as lewed³ as be geese.

'What recketh me of your authorities? 10150
I wot well that this Jew, this Solomon,
Found of us women foolēs many one:
But though that he ne found no good woman,
There hath yfoundeden many another man
Women full good, and true, and virtuous;
Witness on them that dwelt in Christé's house,

¹ Al-
though.
² Face it.

³ Stupid.

With martyrdom they proved their constance. 10157

The Roman gestës¹ maken remembrance

Of many a very true wife also.

But, Sir, ne be not wroth, all be it so,

Though that he said he found no good woman,

I pray you take the sentence² of the man:

He meant thus, That in sovereign bounty

N'is none but God, no, neither he nor she.³

'Hey, for the very God that n'is but one,

What maken ye so much of Solomon?

What though he made a temple, Godde's house?

What though he richë were and glorious?

So made he eke a temple of false goddës,

How might he do a thing that more forbode⁴ is?

Pardie, as fair as ye his name emplastre,⁵ 10171

He was a lecher, and an idolastre,⁶

And in his eld he very God forsook.

And if that God ne had (as saith the book)

Spared him for his father's sake, he should

Have lost his regnë⁷ rather than he would.

'I settë⁸ not of all the villainy,

That he of women wrote, a butterfly.

I am a woman, needës must I speak,

Or swell unto that time mine heartë break. 10180

For since he said that we be jangleresses,⁹

As ever may I brooken¹⁰ whole my tresses,

I shall not sparen for no courtesy

To speak him harm, that saith us villainy.'

'Dame,' quod this Pluto, 'be no longer wroth,

I give it up: but since I swore mine oath,

That I would granten him his sight again,

My word shall stand, that warn I you certain:

I am a king, it sit¹¹ me not to lie.'

'And I,' quod she, 'am queen of Faerie. 10190

¹ Histories.

² Opinion.

³ Male nor female.

⁴ Forbidden.

⁵ Plaster over.

⁶ Idolater.

⁷ Kingdom.

⁸ Value.

⁹ Praters.

¹⁰ Enjoy.

¹¹ Becomes.

Her answer she shall have, I undertake, 10191
Let us no morë wordës of it make.'

'Forsooth,' quod he, 'I will you not contráry.'

¹ Parrot.

Now let us turn again to January,
That in the garden with his fairë May
Singeth well merrier than the popinjay:¹

'You love I best, and shall, and other none.'

² Pear-tree.

So long about the alleys is he gone,

Till he was come again to thilkë pery,²

Where as this Damian sitteth full merry 10200

On high, among the freshë leavës green.

This freshë May, that is so bright and sheen,

'Gan for to sigh, and said, 'Alas my side!

Now, Sir,' quod she, 'for ought that may betide

I must have of the pearës that I see,

Or I must die, so sorë longeth me

To eaten of the smallë pearës green:

Help, for her love that is of heaven queen!

I tell you well a woman in my plight

May have to fruit so great an appetite,

10210

That she may dien, but she of it have.'

³ Had not.

⁴ Servant.

'Alas!' quod he, 'that I n'ad³ here a knave,⁴

That couldë climb, alas! alas!' quod he,

⁵ No matter.

'For I am blind.' 'Yea, Sir, no force,'⁵ quod she;

'But would ye vouchësafe for Goddë's sake,

The pery in with your armës for to take,

(For well I wot that ye mistrusten me,)

Then would I climben well enough,' quod she,

'So I my foot might setten on your back.'

'Certes,' said he, 'therein shall be no lack, 10220

Might I you helpen with mine heartë blood.'

⁶ Twig.

He stoopeth down, and on his back she stood,

And caught her by a twist,⁶ and up she go'th.

(Ladies, I pray you that ye be not wroth,

I cannot glose, I am a rudë man :) 10225

And suddenly anon this Damian

'Gan pullen up the smock, and in he throng.

And when that Pluto saw this greatë wrong,
To January he gave again his sight,

And made him see as well as ever he might. 10230

And when he thus had caught his sight again,

Ne was there never man of thing so fain :

But on his wife his thought was evermo.

Up to the tree he cast his eyen two,

And saw how Damian his wife had dress'd

In such mannére, it may not be express'd,

But if I wouldë speak uncourteously.

And up he gave a roaring and a cry,

As doth the mother when the child shall die ;

'Out! help! alas! harow!' he 'gan to cry; 10240

'O strongë lady store, what doest thou?'

And she answér'd: 'Sirë, what aileth you?

Have patiënce and reason in your mind,

I have you helped on both your eyen blind.

Up peril of my soul, I shall not lien,

As me was taught to helped with your eyen,

Was nothing better for to make you see,

Than struggle with a man upon a tree :

God wot, I did it in full good intent.'

'Struggle!' quod he, 'yea, algate in it went. 10250

God give you both one shamës death to dien!

He swived thee; I saw it with mine eyen;

And ellës be I hanged by the halse.'¹

¹ Neck.

'Then is,' quod she, 'my medicine all false;

For certainly, if that ye mighten see,

Ye would not say these wordës unto me.

Ye have some glimpsing, and no perfect sight.'

'I see,' quod he, 'as well as ever I might,

(Thanked be God,) with both mine eyen two, 10259
And by my faith methought he did thee so.'

'Ye maze, ye mazen, goodë Sir,' quod she ;
'This thank have I for I have made you see :
Alas!' quod she, 'that ever I was so kind.'

'Now, dame,' quod he, 'let all pass out of mind :

¹ Dear.

Come down, my lefe,¹ and if I have missaid,

² Grieved.

God help me so, as I am evil apaid.²
But by my father's soul, I ween'd have sein,
How that this Damian had by thee lein,
And that thy smock had lain upon his breast.'

'Yea, Sir,' quod she, 'ye may ween as you lest :

But, Sir, a man that waketh of his sleep, 10271

He may not suddenly well taken keep

Upon a thing, nor see it perfectly,

³ Awaken-
ed.

Till that he be adawed³ verily.

Right so a man, that long hath blind ybe,

He may not suddenly so well ysee,

First when his sight is new comen again,

As he that hath a day or two yseen.

Till that your sight ysettled be a while,

There may full many a sightë you beguile. 10280

Beware, I pray you, for by heaven king

Full many a man weeneth to see a thing,

And it is all another than it seemeth :

He which that misconceiveth oft misdeemeth.'

And with that word she leapt down from the tree.

This January, who is glad but he ?

⁴ Embrac-
eth.

He kisseth her, and clippeth⁴ her full oft,

And on her womb he stroketh her full soft ;

⁵ Led.

And to his palace home he hath her lad.⁵

Now, goodë men, I pray you to be glad. 10290

Thus endeth here my tale of January,
God bless us, and his mother, Saint Marý.

THE SQUIRE'S PROLOGUE.

<p>‘By Goddë’s mercy,’ said our Hostë tho,¹ ‘Now such a wife I pray God keep me fro. Lo, suchë sleightës and subtilities In women be; for aye as busy as bees Be they us silly men for to deceive, And from a soothë² will they ever weive.³ By this Merchantë’s tale it proveth well. But nathëless, as true as any steel, I have a wife, though that she poorë be; But of her tongue a blabbing shrew is she; And yet she hath an heap of vices mo. Thereof no force;⁴ let all such thingës go. But weet⁵ ye what? in counsel be it said, Me rueth sore I am unto her tied; For, and⁶ I shouldë reckon every vice, Which that she hath, ywis⁷ I were too nice; And causë why, it should reported be And told to her of⁸ some of this company, (Of whom it needeth not for to declare, Since women connen⁹ utter¹⁰ such chaffare,)¹¹ And eke my wit sufficeth not thereto To tellen all; wherefore my tale is do. ‘Squiér, come near, if it your willë be,</p>	10293	1 Then.
	10300	<p>² Truth. ³ Swerve.</p>
	10310	<p>⁴ No mat- ter. ⁵ Know. ⁶ If. ⁷ Certainly. ⁸ By. ⁹ Know. ¹⁰ Utterly, perfect- ly. ¹¹ Ware.</p>

¹ Know.

And say somewhat of love, for certes ye
 Connen¹ thereon as much as any man.'

10316

² Pleasure.

'Nay, Sir,' quod he, 'but such thing as I can
 With heartly will, for I will not rebel
 Against your lust,² a talë will I tell.
 Have me excused if I speak amiss;
 My will is good; and lo, my tale is this.'

THE SQUIRE'S TALE.

At Sarra, in the land of Tartary,
 There dwelt a king that warrayed Russie,
 Through which there died many a doughty man:
 This noble king was cleped Cambuscan,
 Which in his time was of so great renown,
 That there n'as nowhere in no regioun,
 So excellent a lord in allë thing:

³ Equal.

Him lacked nought that 'longeth to a king,
 As of the sect of which that he was born.
 He kept his law to which he was ysworn,
 And thereto he was hardy, wise, and rich,
 And piteous and just, and alway yliche;³
 True of his word, benign and honourable;
 Of his courage as any centre stable;
 Young, fresh, and strong, in armës desirous,
 As any bachelor of all his house.

10330

A fair persón he was, and fortunate,
 And kept alway so well royal estate,
 That there n'as nowhere such another man.

10340

This noble king, this Tartar Cambuscan,
 Had two sonnës by Elfeta his wife,

Of which the eldest son hight Algarsife, 10344
That other was ycleped Camballo.

A daughter had this worthy king also,
That youngest was, and hightë Canace:
But for to tellen you all her beauty,
It li'th not in my tongue, nor in my conning,¹
I dare not undertake so high a thing: 10350

Mine English eke is insufficiënt,
It mustë be a rethor² excellent,
That coud³ his colours 'longing for that art,
If he should her describen any part:
I am not such, I must speak as I can.

And so befell, that when this Cambuscan
Hath twenty winter borne his diadem,
As he was wont from year to year I deem,
He let the feast of his nativity
Done⁴ cryen, throughout Sarrá his city, 10360
The last Idus of March, aftér the year.

Phœbus the sun full jollif was and clear,
For he was nigh his exaltatiön
In Martë's face, and in his mansiön
In Aries, the cholerick hot sign:
Full lusty⁵ was the weather and benign, 10370
For which the fowls against the sunnë sheen,⁶
What for the season and the youngë green,
Full loudë sungen their affections:
Them seem'd have gotten them protections
Against the sword of winter keen and cold.

This Cambuscan, of which I have you told,
In royal vestiments, sat on his dais
With diadem, full high in his palace;
And held his feast so solemn and so rich,
That in this world ne was there none it liche.⁷
Of which if I shall tellen all th' array,

¹ Skill.² Rhetorician.³ Knew.⁴ Caused.⁵ Pleasant.⁶ Bright.⁷ Like.

Then would it occupy a summer's day; 10378
 And eke it needeth not for to devise
 At every course the order of their service.

¹ Dishes.

I will not tellen of their strangē sewes,¹
 Nor of their swannēs, ne their heronsewes.²
 Eke in that land, as tellen knightēs old,

² Young
herons.

There is some meat that is full dainty hold,
 That in this land men reck³ of it full small:
 There n'is no man that may reporten all.

³ Care for.

I will not tarrien you, for it is prime,
 And, for it is no fruit, but loss of time,
 Unto my purpose I will have recourse.

⁴ Nobility.

And so befell that after the thirdē course, 10390
 While that this king sat thus in his nobley,⁴
 Hearn'ning his minstrels their thingēs play
 Before him at his board deliciously,

In at the hallē door all suddenly
 There came a knight upon a steed of brass,
 And in his hand a broad mirrōr of glass;
 Upon his thumb he had of gold a ring,
 And by his side a naked sword hanging:
 And up he rideth to the highē board.

In all the hall ne was there spoke a word, 10400
 For marvel of this knight; him to behold
 Full busily they waiten young and old.

This strangē knight that came thus suddenly
 All armed save his head full richēly,
 Saluteth king and queen, and lordēs all
 By order, as they satten in the hall,
 With so high reverence and observānce,
 As well in speech as in his countenānce,
 That Gawain with his oldē courtesy,
 Though he were come again out of Faerie, 10410
 Ne could him not amenden with a word.

And after this, before the highē board
 He with a manly voice said his messáge,
 After the form used in his languáge,
 Withouten vice of syllable or of letter.

10412

And for his talē shouldē seem the better,
 Accordant to his wordēs was his chere,¹
 As teacheth art of speech them that it lere.²

¹ Demean-
 our.
² Learn.

Albeit that I cannot sound his style,
 Ne cannot climben over so high a stile,
 Yet say I this, as to común intent,
 Thus much amounteth all that ever he meant,
 If it so be that I have it in mind.

10420

He said; 'The king of Araby' and of Ind,

My liegē lord, on this solemnē day
 Saluteth you as he best can and may,
 And sendeth you in honour of your feast

By me, that am all ready at your hest,³
 This steed of brass, that easily and well

³ Com-
 mand.

Can in the space of a day naturel,
 (This is to say, in four-and-twenty hours,)

10430

Whereso you list, in drought or ellēs show'rs,
 Bearen your body into every place,

To which your heartē willeth for to pace,⁴

⁴ Go.

Withouten wemme⁵ of you, through foul or fair.

⁵ Fault.

Or if you list to fly as high in th' air,

As doth an eagle, when him list to soar,

This samē steed shall bear you evermore

Withouten harm, till ye be there⁶ you lest,⁷

⁶ Where.

(Though that ye sleepen on his back or rest,) 10440

⁷ Please.

And turn again, with writhing of a pin.

He that it wrought, he coudē⁸ many a gin;⁹

⁸ Knew.

He waited many a constellatió,

⁹ Contriv-
 ance.

Ere he had done this operatió,

And knew full many a seal and many a bond.

¹ King-
dom.

‘This mirror eke, that I have in mine hond, 10446
Hath such a might, that men may in it see,
When there shall fall any adversity
Unto your regne,¹ or to yourself also,
And openly, who is your friend or foe.
And over all this, if any lady bright
Hath set her heart on any manner wight,
If he be false, she shall his treason see,
His newë love, and all his subtlety
So openly, that there shall nothing hide.

‘Wherefore against this lusty summer-tide
This mirror and this ring, that ye may see,
He hath sent to my lady Canace,
Your excellentë daughter that is here.

² Speech.

‘The virtue of this ring, if ye will hear, 10460
Is this, that if her list it for to wear
Upon her thumb, or in her purse it bear,
There is no fowl that fleeth under heaven,
That she ne shall well understand his steven,²
And know his meaning openly and plain,
And answer him in his languáge again :
And every grass that groweth upon root
She shall eke know, and whom it will do boot,³
All be his woundës ne’er so deep and wide.

³ Remedy.

‘This naked sword, that hangeth by my side, 10470
Such virtue hath, that what man that it smite,
Throughout his armour it will carve and bite,
Were it as thick as is a branched oak :
And what man that is wounded with the stroke
Shall ne’er be whole, till that you list of grace
To stroken him with the plat⁴ in thilk⁵ place
There⁶ he is hurt ; this is as much to sayn,
Ye musten with the plattë sword again
Stroken him in the wound, and it will close.

⁴ Flat.

⁵ The
same.

⁶ Where.

This is the very sooth withouten glose,¹
It faileth not, while it is in your hold.'

10480

¹ Deceit.

And when this knight hath thus his talë told,
He rideth out of hall, and down he light:
His steedë, which that shone as sunnë bright,
Stands in the court as still as any stone.

This knight is to his chamber led anon,
And is unarm'd, and to the meat yset.

These presents been full richëly yfet,²

² Fetched.

This is to say, the sword and the mirrouër,
And borne anon into the highë tow'r,

10490

With certain officers ordain'd therefore;

And unto Canace the ring is bore

Solemnëly, there³ she sat at the table;

³ Where.

But sikerly,⁴ withouten any fable,

⁴ Certainly.

The horse of brass, that may not be remued;⁵

⁵ Removed.

It stands, as it were to the ground yglued;

There may no man out of the place it drive

For no engine, of windlass, or polive:⁶

⁶ Pulley.

And causë why, for they con⁷ not the craft,

⁷ Know.

And therefore in the place they have it laft,

10500

Till that the knight hath taught them the mannëre

To voiden⁸ him, as ye shall after hear.

⁸ Remove.

Great was the press, that swarmed to and fro

To gauren⁹ on this horse that standeth so:

⁹ Gaze.

For it so high was, and so broad and long,

So well proportioned for to be strong,

Right as it were a steed of Lombardy;

Therewith so horsely, and so quick of eye,

As it a gentle Poileis courser were:

For certes, from his tail unto his ear

10510

Nature nor art ne could him not amend

In no degree, as all the people wend.¹⁰

¹⁰ Thought.

But evermore their mostë wonder was,

How that it couldë go, and was of brass; 10514

It was of Faerie, as the people seem'd.

Diversë folk diversely have deem'd;

As many heads, as many wittës been.

¹ Bees. They murmured, as doth a swarm of been,¹

² Reasons. And maden skills² after their fantasies,

Rehearsing of the oldë poetries, 10520

And said it was ylike the Pegasee,

The horse that haddë wingës for to flee,

Or else it was the Greekë's horse Sinon,

That broughtë Troyë to destructiön,

³ Adven- As men may in these oldë gestës³ read.

⁴ Dread. ' Mine heart (quoth one) is evermore in drede,⁴

I trow some men of armës be therein,

That shapen them this city for to win:

It were right good that all such thing were know.'

⁵ Whisper- Another rownd⁵ to his fellow low, 10530

ed. And said, ' He lieth, for it is rather like

An apparence ymade by some magíc,

As jugglers playen at these feastës great.'

Of sundry doubtës thus they jangle and treat.

⁶ Ignorant. As lewed⁶ people deemen commonly

Of thingës, that be made more subtly,

Than they can in their lew'dness comprehend,

They deemen gladly to the badder end.

And some of them wond'red on the mirroúr,

⁷ Chief That borne was up in to the master tow'r,⁷ 10540

tower. How men might in it suchë thingës see.

Another answér'd, and said, ' It might well be

Naturally by compositiöns

Of angles, and of sly reflectiöns;'

And saidë that in Rome was suchë one.

They speak of Alhazen and Vitellon,

And Aristotle, that writen in their lives

Of quaintë¹ mirrors, and of próspectives,
As knowen they, that have their bookës heard.

10548

¹ Curious.

And other folk have wonder'd on the swerd,
That wouldë piercen throughout every thing:
And fell in speech of Telephus the king,
And of Achilles for his quaintë spear,
For he could with it bothë heal and dere,²
Right in such wise as men may with the swerd,
Of which right now ye have yourselven heard.
They speaken of sundry harding of métal,
And speaken of medicínës therewithal,
And how, and when it should yharded be,
Which is unknown alगतës³ unto me.

10560

² Wound.³ However.

Then speaken they of Canaceë's ring,
And saiden all, that such a wonder thing
Of craft of ringës heard they never none,
Save that he, Moses and King Solomon,
Hadden a name of conning⁴ in such art.
Thus say the people, and drawn them apart.

⁴ Knowing.

But nathëless some saiden that it was
Wonder to maken of fern ashes glass,
And yet is glass nought like ashes of fern,
But for they have yknowen it so ferne,⁵
Therefore ceaseth their jangling and their wonder.

10570

⁵ Before.

As sorë wonder some on cause of thunder,
On ebb and flood, on gossamer, and on mist,
And on all thing, till that the cause is wist.⁶

⁶ Known.

Thus jangle they, and deemen and devise,
Till that the king 'gan from his board arise.

Phœbus hath left the angle meridional,
And yet ascending was the beast réal,⁷
The gentle Lion, with his Aldrian,
When that this Tartar king, this Cambuscan,
Rose from his board, thereas he sat full high:

10580

⁷ Royal.

¹ Orna-
ments.

Before him go'th the loudë minstrelsy, 10582
Till he come to his chamber of parëments,¹
Thereas they sounden divers instruments,
That it is like an heaven for to hear.

Now dancen lusty Venus' children dear:
For in the Fish their lady sat full high,
And looketh on them with a friendly eye.

² Fetched.
³ Soon.

This noble king is set upon his throne;
This strangë knight is fet² to him full sone,³ 10590
And on the dance he go'th with Canace.

Here is the revel and the jollity,
That is not able a dull man to devise:
He must have knowen love and his service,
And been a feastly man, as fresh as May,
That shouldë you devisen such array.

⁴ Strange.

Who couldë tellen you the form of dances
So uncouth,⁴ and so freshë countenances,
Such subtle lookings and dissimulings,
For dread of jealous men's appërceivings? 10600
No man but Launcelot, and he is dead.

⁵ Pleasure.

Therefore I pass o'er all this lustyhed,⁵
I say no more, but in this jolliness
I let them, till men to the supper them dress.

⁶ Bids.
⁷ Haste.

The steward bit⁶ the spices for to hie⁷
And eke the wine, in all this melody;
The ushers and the squiëry been gone,
The spices and the wine is come anon:
They eat and drink, and when this had an end,
Unto the temple, as reason was, they wend: 10610
The service done, they suppen all by day.

⁸ Greatest.

What needeth you rehearsen their array?
Each man wot well, that at a kingë's feast
Is plenty, to the most⁸ and to the least,
And dainties more than be in my knowing.

At after supper go'th this noble king 10616
To see this horse of brass, with all a rout
Of lordës and of ladies him about.

Such wond'ring was there on this horse of brass,
That since the great assiege of Troyë was,
Thereas men wonder'd on an horse also,

Ne was there such a wond'ring as was tho.¹

But finally the king asketh the knight
The virtue of this courser, and the might,
And prayed him to tell his governance.²

¹ Then.

² Mode of
govern-
ing him.

This horse anon 'gan for to trip and dance,
When that the knight laid hand upon his rein,
And saidë, 'Sir, there n'is no more to sayn,

But when you list to riden anywhere,

Ye musten trill³ a pin, stant⁴ in his ear,

10630

³ Turn.
⁴ Which
stands.

Which I shall tellen you betwixt us two,

Ye musten name him to what place also,

Or to what country that you list to ride.

'And when ye come there as you list abide,

Bid him descend, and trill another pin,

(For therein li'th th' effect of all the gin,⁵)

And he will down descend and do your will,

And in that place he will abiden still:

Though all the world had the contrary swore,

He shall not thence be drawë nor be bore.

10640

⁵ Contriv-
ance.

Or if you list to bid him thennës go,

Trillë this pin, and he will van'sh anon

Out of the sight of every manner wight,⁶

And come again, be it by day or night,

When that you list to elepen⁷ him again

In such a guise, as I shall to you sayn

Betwixen you and me, and that full soon.

Ride when you list, there n'is no more to don.'

⁶ Sort of
person.

⁷ Call.

Informed when the king was of the knight,

	And hath conceived in his wit aright	10650
	The manner and the form of all this thing, Full glad and blithe, this noble doughty king Repaireth to his revel, as beforne. The bridle is in to the tow'r yborne,	
¹ Loved.	And kept among his jewels lefe ¹ and dear:	
² Know not.	The horse vanish'd, I n'ot ² in what mannere, Out of their sight; ye get no more of me:	
³ Leave.	But this I lete ³ in lust and jollity This Cambuscan his lordës feastyng, Till that well nigh the day began to spring.	10660

PARS SECUNDA.

⁴ Nurse.	The nourice ⁴ of digestiön, the sleep,	
⁵ Notice.	'Gan on them wink, and bade them taken keep, ⁵ That muchel drink and labour will have rest:	
⁶ Kissed.	And with a gaping mouth them all he kest, ⁶ And said, that it was time to lie adown, For blood was in his dominatiouün: Cherisheth blood, natüre's friend, quod he.	
	'They thanken him gaping, by two, by three; And every wight 'gan draw him to his rest, As sleep them bade, they took it for the best.	10670
	Their dreamës shall not now be told for me;	
⁷ Fumes of wine.	Full were their headës of fumosity, ⁷ That causeth dream, of which there is no charge.*	
⁸ Full day.	They sleepen till that it was primë large, ⁸	
⁹ Except.	The mostë part, but ⁹ it were Canace; She was full measurable, as women be. For of her father had she take her leave To go to rest, soon after it was eve;	
¹⁰ Made pale.	Her listë not appalled ¹⁰ for to be,	

* 'No charge:' No consequence to be apprehended.

¹ Knew.	For right anon she wistē ¹ what they meant Right by their song, and knew all their intent.	10713
² Nucleus, chief matter.	The knottē, ² why that every tale is told, If it be tarried till the lust ³ be cold	
³ Inclina- tion.	Of them, that have it hearken'd after yore, ⁴	
⁴ Some while.	The savour passeth ever longer the more, For fulsomeness of the prolixity: And by that samē reason thinketh me I should unto the knottē condescend, And maken of her walking soon an end.	10720
⁵ Quite dry.	Amid a tree for-dry, ⁵ as white as chalk, As Canace was playing in her walk, There sat a falcon over her head full high, That with a piteous voice so 'gan to cry, That all the wood resounded of her cry, And beaten had herself so piteously With both her wingēs, till the redē blood Ran endēlong the tree, there as she stood.	10730
⁶ Constant- ly.	And ever in one ⁶ alway she cried and shrigh ⁷ ,	
⁷ Shrieked.	And with her beak herselven she so twigh ⁸ ,	
⁸ Plucked.	That there n'is tiger, ne no cruel beast, That dwelleth either in wood, or in forēst, That n'old have wept, if that he weepen could, For sorrow of her, she shrigh ⁷ alway so loud.	
	For there was never yet no man on live, If that he could a falcon well describe, That heard of such another of fairēness As well of plumage, as of gentleness, Of shape, of all that might yreckon'd be. A falcon peregrinē seemed she Of fremdē ⁹ land, and ever as she stood, She swooned now and now for lack of blood, Till well-nigh is she fallen from the tree. This fairē kingē's daughter Canace,	10740
⁹ Strange.		

That on her finger bare the quaintë¹ ring, 10747
 Through which she understood well every thing
 That any fowl may in his leden² sayn,
 And could answeér him in his leden again,
 Hath understanden what this falcon said,
 And well-nigh for the ruth³ almost she deyð:⁴
 And to the tree she go'th full hastily,
 And on this falcon looketh piteously,
 And held her lap abroad, for well she wist
 The falcon mustë fallen from the twist⁵
 When that she swooned next, for faute⁶ of blood.
 A longë while to waiten her she stood,
 Till at the last she spake in this mannëre
 Unto the hawk, as ye shall after hear. 10760

¹ Curious.² Lan-
guage.³ Pity.
⁴ Died.⁵ Twig.⁶ Wani.

‘What is the cause, if it be for to tell,
 That ye be in this furial⁷ pain of hell?’
 Quod Canace unto this hawk above;
 ‘Is this for sorrow of death, or loss of love?’
 For as I trow, these be the causes two,
 That causen most a gentle heartë woe.
 Of other harm it needeth not to speak,
 For ye yourself upon yourself awreke,⁸
 Which proveth well, that either ire or drede⁹
 Must be encheson¹⁰ of your cruel deed, 10770
 Since that I see none other wight you chase.
 For the love of God, as do yourselven grace:
 Or what may be your help? for west nor east
 Ne saw I never ere now no bird nor beast,
 That fared with himself so piteously.
 Ye slay me with your sorrow verily,
 I have of you so great compassioun.
 For Goddë's love come from the tree adown;
 And as I am a kingë's daughter true,
 If that I verily the causes knew 10780

⁷ Raging.⁸ Revenge.⁹ Fear.¹⁰ Cause.

¹ Uneasiness.	Of your disease, ¹ if it lay in my might,	10781
² Surely.	I would amend it, ere that it were night,	
³ Nature.	As wisly ² help me the great God of kind. ³	
	And herbës shall I right enough yfind, To healen with your hurtës hastily.'	
⁴ Shrieked.	Then shrigh ⁴ this falcon yet more piteously Than ever she did, and fell to ground anon, And li'th aswoun, as dead as li'th a stone, Till Canace hath in her lap her take, Unto that time she 'gan of swoon awake:	10790
⁵ Awoke.	And after that she out of swoon abraid, ⁵	
⁶ Language.	Right in her hawkës' leden ⁶ thus she said: 'That pity runneth soon in gentle heart (Feeling his similitude in painë's smart) Is proved allë day, as men may see, As well by work as by authority, ⁷	
⁷ Text.	For gentle heartë kitheth ⁸ gentleness.	
⁸ Sheweth.	I see well, that ye have on my distress Compassiön, my fairë Canace, Of very womanly benignity,	10800
	That nature in your principles hath set.	
⁹ Better.	But for none hopë for to fare the bet, ⁹ But for t' obey unto your heartë free, And for to maken other yware by me, As by the whelp chastised is the lion, Right for that cause and that conclusiön, While that I have a leisure and a space,	
¹⁰ Depart.	Mine harm I will confessen ere I pace.' ¹⁰ And ever while that one her sorrow told, That other wept, as she to water wold,	10810
	Till that the falcon bade her to be still, And with a sigh right thus she said her till:	
¹¹ Same.	'There I was bred, (alas that ilkë ¹¹ day!) And foster'd in a rock of marble gray	

So tenderly, that nothing ailed me. 10815

I ne wist not what was adversity,
Till I could flee full high under the sky.

‘Then dwell’d a tercëlet¹ me fastë by,

¹ Male hawk.

That seemed well of allë gentleness,

All were he full of treason and falsenëss. 10820

It was so wrapped under humble chere,²

² Demeanour.

And under hue of truth in such mannëre,

Under pleasance, and under busy pain,

That no wight could have ween’d he couldë feign,

So deep in grain he dyed his colouris.

Right as a serpent hideth him under flowers,

Till he may see his timë for to bite;

Right so this god of lovë’s hypocrite

Doth so his ceremonies and obeisánce,

And keep’th in semblant all his observánce, 10830

That souneth³ unto gentleness of love.

³ Is consonant to.

As on a tomb is all the fair above,

And under is the corpse, such as ye wot;

Such was this hypocrite both cold and hot,

And in this wise he served his intent,

That, save the fiend, none wistë what he meant:

Till he so long had weeped and complain’d,

And many a year his service to me feign’d,

Till that mine heart, too piteous and too nice,⁴

⁴ Foolish.

All innocent of his crowned mallice,

10840

For-feared of his death, as thoughtë me,

Upon his oathës and his surëty,

Granted him love, on this conditioun,

That evermore mine honour and renown

Were saved, bothë privy and apert;⁵

⁵ Openly.

This is to say, that, after his desert,

I gave him all mine heart and all my thought,

(God wot, and he, that other wayës nought,)

And took his heart in change of mine for aye. 10849
 But sooth is said, gone since is many a day,
 A true wight and a thief thinken not one.

‘And when he saw the thing so far ygone,
 That I had granted him fully my love,
 In such a guise as I have said above,
 And given him my truë heart as free
 As he swore that he gave his heart to me,
 Anon this tiger, full of doubleness,
 Fell on his knees with so great humbleness,
 With so high reverence, as by his chere,¹

¹ Mien.

So like a gentle lover of mannére, 10860
 So ravish’d, as it seemed, for the joy,
 That never Jason, nor París of Troy,
 Jason? certes, ne never other man,

² First of
all.

Since Lamech was, that alderfirst² began
 To loven two, as writen folk befor,

³ Since.

Ne never sithen³ the first man was born,
 Ne couldë man by twenty thousand part

⁴ Soph-
isms.

Counterfeit the sophimës⁴ of his art;

⁵ Shoe.

Ne were worthy to unbuckle his galoche,⁵
 There doubleness of feigning should approach, 10870
 Ne could so thank a wight, as he did me.

His manner was an heaven for to see
 To any woman, were she never so wise;
 So painted he and kempt, at point devise,
 As well his wordës, as his countenance.

And I so loved him for his obeisance,
 And for the truth I deemed in his heart,
 That if so were that any thing him smart,

⁶ Little.

All were it never so lite,⁶ and I it wist,
 Methought I felt death at my heartë twist. 10880

And shortly, so farforth this thing is went,
 That my will was his willë’s instrument;

This is to say, my will obey'd his will 10883

In allë thing, as far as reason fill,¹

¹ Fell.

Keeping the boundës of my worship ever:

Ne never had I thing so lefe,² nor lever,³

² Dear.

³ Dearer.

As him, God wot, ne never shall no mo.

‘This lasteth longer than a year or two,

That I supposéd of him nought but good.

But finally, thus at the last it stood, 10890

That fortune wouldë that he mustë twin⁴

⁴ Separate.

Out of that placë which that I was in.

Where me was woe, it is no questiún;

I cannot make of it description.

For one thing dare I tellen boldëly,

I know what is the pain of death thereby,

Such harm I felt, for he ne might byleve.⁵

⁵ Stay.

‘So on a day of me he took his leave,

So sorrowful eke, that I ween'd verily,

That he had felt as muchel harm as I, 10900

When that I heard him speak, and saw his hue.

But nathëless, I thought he was so true,

And eke that he repairen should again

Within a little whilë, sooth to sayn,

And reason would eke that he mustë go

For his honoúr, as often happ'neth so,

That I made virtue of necessity,

And took it well, since that it mustë be.

As I best might, I hid from him my sorrow,

And took him by the hand, Saint John to

borrow,⁶

10910 ⁶ Witness.

And said him thus; “Lo, I am yourës all,

Be such as I have been to you and shall.”

‘What he answér'd, it needeth not rehearse;

Who can say bet⁷ than he, who can do werse?

⁷ Better.

When he hath all well said, then hath he done.

Therefore behoveth him a full long spoon, 10916
That shall eat with a fiend; thus heard I say.

‘So at the last he mustē forth his way,
And forth he flī’th, till he come there him lest.
When it came him to purpose for to rest,
I trow that he had thilkē text in mind,
That allē thing repairing to his kind
Gladdeth himself; thus say men as I guess:

¹ Their
own
nature.

Men loven of proper kind¹ newfangleness,
As birdēs do, that men in cages feed.
For though thou night and day take of them heed,
And strew their cagē fair and soft as silk,
And give them sugar, honey, bread, and milk,
Yet right anon as that his door is up,
He with his feet will spurnen down his cup, 10930
And to the wood he will, and wormēs eat;
So newēfangle be they of their meat,
And loven novelties of proper kind;
No gentleness of blood ne may them bind.

‘So fared this tercelet, alas the day!
Though he were gentle born, and fresh, and gay,
And goodly for to see, and humble, and free,
He saw upon a time a kitē flee,
And suddenly he loved this kitē so,

That all his love is clean from me ago: 10940
And hath his truthē falsed in this wise.
Thus hath the kite my love in her servíce,
And I am lorn² withouten remedy.’

² Lost.

And with that word this falcon ’gan to cry,
And swooneth eft³ in Canaceē’s barm.⁴

³ Again.

⁴ Lap.

Great was the sorrow for that hawkē’s harm,
That Canace and all her women made;
They n’isten⁵ how they might the falcon glade.⁶
But Canace home bear’th her in her lap,

⁵ Knew
not.

⁶ Make
glad.

And softely in plasters 'gan her wrap, 10950
There as she with her beak had hurt herselfe.

Now cannot Canace but herbës delve
Out of the ground, and maken salvës new
Of herbës precious and fine of hue,
To healen with this hawk ; from day to
night
She doth her business, and all her might.
And by her beddë's head she made a mew,
And cover'd it with velouettës blue,
In sign of truth, that is in woman seen ;
And all without the mew is painted green, 10960
In which were painted all these falsë
fowls,

As be these tidifes, terceletes, and owls ;
And piës, on them for to cry and chide,
Right for despite were painted them beside.

Thus lete¹ I Canace her hawk keeping. ¹ Leave.
I will no more as now speak of her ring,
Till it come eft² to purpose for to sayn, ² Again.
How that this falcon got her love again
Repentant, as the story telleth us,
By mediatiön of Camballus, 10970
The kingë's son, of which that I you told.
But hennësforth I will my process hold
To speak of áventures, and of battailes,
That yet was never heard so great marvailles.

First I will tellen you of Cambuscan,
That in his timë many a city wan :
And after will I speak of Algarsif,
How that he won Theodora to his wife,
For whom full oft in great períl he was,
Ne had he been holpen by the horse of
brass. 10980

And after will I speak of Camballo,
 That fought in listës with the brethren two
 For Canace, ere that he might her win,
 And there¹ I left I will again begin.

10981

¹ Where.

* * * * *

THE FRANKLIN'S PROLOGUE.

'In faith, Squiér, thou hast thee well acquit 10985
And gently, I praisë well thy wit,'

Quod the Franklin; 'considering thine youth,
So feelingly thou speakest, Sir, I aloue¹ thee

¹ Praise.

As to my doom,² there is none that is here,

² Judgment.

Of eloquencë that shall be thy peer,

10990

If that thou live; God give thee goodë chance,

And in virtue send thee continuáncë,

For of thy speaking I have great dainty.

I have a son, and by the Trinity

It were me lever³ than twenty pound worth land,

³ Rather.

Though it right now were fallen in my hand,

He were a man of such discretión,

As that ye be: fie on possessiön,

But⁴ if a man be virtuous withal.

⁴ Unless.

I have my sonë snibbed,⁵ and yet shall,

11000

⁵ Rebuked.

For he to virtue listeth not t' intend,⁶

⁶ Apply.

But for to play at dice, and to dispend,

And lose all that he hath, is his uságe;

And he had lever talken with a page,

Than to commune with any gentle wight,

There he might learen gentilless aright.'

'Straw for your gentillessë,' quod our Host.

¹ Knowest. 'What? Frankëlin, pardie, Sir, well thou wost,¹ 11008

That each of you must tellen at the lest

A tale or two, or broken his behest.'

'That know I well, Sir,' quod the Frankëlin,

'I pray you haveth me not in disdain,

Though I to this man speak a word or two.'

'Tell on thy tale, withouten wordës mo.'

'Gladly, Sir Host,' quod he, 'I will obey
Unto your will; now heark'neth what I say;

I will you not contrarien in no wise,

As far as that my wittës may suffice.

I pray to God that it may pleasen you,

Then wot I well that it is good enow. 11020

'These oldë gentle Bretons in their days

Of diverse áventurës maden lays,

Rhymed in their firstë Breton tongue;

Which layës with their instruments they sung,

Or ellës readen them for their pleasáncë,

And one of them have I in remembráncë,

Which I shall say with good will as I can.

² Plain. 'But, Sirs, because I am a borel² man,

At my beginning first I you beseech

Have me excused of my rudë speech. 11030

I learned never rhetoric certáin;

Thing that I speak, it must be bare and plain.

I slept never on the mount of Parnasso,

Nor learned Marcus Tullius Cicero.

³ Doubt. Colours ne know I none, withouten drede,³

But such colóurs as growen in the mead,

Or ellës such as men dye with or paint;

⁴ Strange. Colóurs of rhetoric be to me quaint;⁴

My spirit feeleth not of such mattere.

But if you list my talë shall ye hear. 11040

THE FRANKLIN'S TALE.

IN Armoric', that called is Bretagne, 11041

There was a knight, that lov'd and did his pain

To serve a lady in his bestë wise;

And many a labour, many a great emprise

He for his lady wrought, ere she were won:

For she was one the fairest under sun,

And eke thereto come of so high kindred,

That well unnethes¹ durst this knight for dread

¹ Scarcely.

Tell her his woe, his pain, and his distress.

But at the last, she for his worthiness, 11050

And namëly for his meek obeisance,

Hath such a pity caught of his penance,

That privily she fell of his accord

To take him for her husband and her lord,

(Of such lordship as men have o'er their wives;)

And, for to lead the more in bliss their lives,

Of his free will he swore her as a knight,

That never in all his life he day nor night

Ne shouldë take upon him no mast'ry

Against her will, nor kithe² her jealousy, 11060

² Shew.

But her obey, and follow her will in all,

As any lover to his lady shall:

Save that the name of sovereignty

That would he have for shame of his degree.

She thanked him, and with full great humbless

She saidë; 'Sir, since of your gentleness

Ye proffer me to have so large a reign,

Ne wouldë God never betwixt us twain,

As in my guilt, were either war or strife:

Sir, I will be your humble truë wife, 11070

¹ Burst.

Have here my truth, till that mine heartē brest.^{'1}
 Thus be they both in quiet and in rest. 11072

For one thing, Sirēs, safely dare I say,
 That friendēs ever each other must obey,
 If they will longē holden company.
 Love will not be constrained by mast'ry.
 When mast'ry cometh, the god of Love anon
 Beateth his wings, and, farewell, he is gone.
 Love is a thing, as any spirit, free.

² By nature.

Women of kind² desiren liberty, 11080

³ Slave.

And not to be constrained as a thrall;³
 And so do men, if soothly I say shall.
 Look who that is most patiēt in love,
 He is at his advantage* all above.
 Patience is an high virtúe certáin,
 For it vanquisheth, as these clerkēs sayn,
 Thingēs that rigour never should attain.
 For every word men may not chide or plain.

⁴ Prosper.

Learneth to suffer, or, so may I go,⁴
 Ye shall it learn whether ye will or no. 11090
 For in this world certáin no wight there is,
 That he ne doth or saith sometime amiss.

Irē, sickness, or constellatiōn,
 Wine, woe, or changing of complexiōn,
 Causeth full oft to do amiss or spoken:
 On every wrong a man may not be wreaken.⁵
 After the timē must be temperance

⁵ Revenged.⁶ Is capable of.

To every wight that can⁶ of governance.
 And therefore hath this worthy wisē knight
 ('To liven in ease) suff'rance her behight;⁷
 And she to him full wisly⁸ 'gan to swear,
 That never should there be default in her.

⁷ Promised.⁸ Surely.

11100

Here may men see an humble wife accord:

* 'He is at his advantage:' Is in possession of every advantage.

Thus hath she take her servant and her lord, 11104
 Servant in love, and lord in marriage.

Then was he both in lordship and servage?

Servage? nay, but in lordship all above,

Since he hath both his lady and his love:

His lady certes, and his wife also,

The which that law of love accordeth to. 11110

And when he was in this prosperity,

Home with his wife he go'th to his country,

Not far from Penmark, there his dwelling was,

Where as he liveth in bliss and in solas.¹

¹ Enjoyment.

² Unless

Who couldē tell, but² he had wedded be,

The joy, the ease, and the prosperity,

That is betwixt an husband and his wife?

A year and more lasteth this blissful life,

Till that this knight, of which I spake of thus,

That of Cairrud was cleped Arviragus, 11120

Shope³ him to go and dwell a year or twain

³ Prepared.

In Engleland, that clep'd was eke Britáin,

To seek in armēs worship and honour,

(For all his lust⁴ he set in such labour:)

⁴ Delight.

And dweltē there two year; the book saith thus.

⁵ Cease.

⁶ Sigheth.

Now will I stint⁵ of this Arviragus,

And speak I will of Dorigen his wife,

That loveth her husband as her heartē's life.

For his absēce weepeth she and siketh,⁶

As do these noble wivēs when them liketh; 11130

She mourneth, waketh, waileth, fasteth, plaineth;

Desire of his presēce her so distraineth,

That all this widē world she set at nought.

Her friendēs, which that knew her heavy thought,

Comfórten her in all that ever they may;

They preachen her, they tell her night and day,

That causēless she slay'th herself, alas!

¹ Assidui-
ty.

And every comfort possible in this case 11138
They do to her, with all their business,¹
All for to make her leave her heaviness.

By process, as ye knowen evereach one,
Men may so longë graven in a stone,
Till some figüre therein imprinted be:
So long have they comforted her, till she
Received hath, by hope and by reasón,
The imprinting of their consolatiún,
Through which her greatë sorrow 'gan assuage;
She may not alway duren in such rage.
And eke Arviragus, in all this care,
Hath sent his letters home of his welfare, 11150
And that he will come hastily again,
Or else had this sorrów her heartë slain.

Her friendës saw her sorrow 'gan to slake,
And prayden her on knees for Goddë's sake
To come and roamen in their company,
Away to driven her dark fantasy:
And finally she granted that request,
For well she saw that it was for the best.

² Saw.

Now stood her castle fastë by the sea,
And often with her friendës walked she, 11160
Her to disporten on the bank on high,
Where as she many a ship and bargë sie,²
Sailing their course, where as them list to go.
But then was that a parcel of her woe,
For to herself full oft, 'Alas!' said she,
'Is there no ship, of so many as I see,
Will bringen home my lord? then were my heart
All warish'd³ of his bitter painë's smart.'

³ Cured.

Another timë would she sit and think,
And cast her eyen downward from the brink; 11170
But when she saw the grisly rockës blake,⁴

⁴ Black.

For very fear so would her heartë quake, 11172

That on her feet she might her not sustene.

Then would she sit adown upon the green,

And piteously into the sea behold,

And say right thus, with careful sikës¹ cold:

¹ Sighs.

‘Eternë God! that through thy púrveyance

Leadest this world by certain governance,

In idle,² as men say, ye nothing make;

² In vain.

But, Lord, these grisly fiendly rockës blake, 11180

That seemen rather a foul confusión

Of work, than any fair creatión

Of such a perfect wisë God and stable,

Why have ye wrought this work unreasonable?

For by this work, north, south, nor west, nor

east,

There n’is³ yfoster’d man, nor bird, nor beast:

³ Is not.

It doth no good, to my wit, but annoyeth.

See ye not, Lord, how mankind it destroyeth?

An hundred thousand bodies of mankind

Have rockës slain, all be they not in mind; 11190

Which mankind is so fair part of thy work,

Thou madest it like to thine owen mark.⁴

⁴ Image.

Then, seemeth it, ye had a great chertée⁵

⁵ Love.

Toward mankind; but how then may it be,

That ye such meanës make it to destroyen?

Which meanës do no good, but ever annoyen.

‘I wot well, clerkës will say as them lest⁶

⁶ Pleaseth.

By arguments, that all is for the best,

Though I ne can the causes nought yknow;

But thilkë⁷ God that made the wind to blow, 11200

⁷ That.

As keep my lord, this is my conclusión:

To clerkës let⁸ I all disputation:

⁸ Leave.

But wouldë God, that all these rockës blake

Were sunken into hellë for his sake.

These rockës slay mine heartë for the fear.' 11205
 Thus would she say with many a piteous tear.

Her friendës saw that it was no disport
 To roamen by the sea, but díscomfort,
 And shape them for to playen somewhere else.
 They ledden her by rivers and by wells, 11210
 And eke in other places délitables;
 They dancen, and they play at chess and tables.

So on a day, right in the morrow-tide,
 Unto a garden that was there beside,
 In which that they had made their ordinance
 Of victual, and of other purveyance,
 They go and play them all the longë day:
 And this was on the sixtë morrow of May,
 Which May had painted with his softë showers
 This garden full of leavës and of flowers: 11220
 And craft of mannë's hand so curiously
 Arrayed had this garden truëly,
 That never was there garden of such price,
 But if it were the very Paradise.
 Th' odour of flow'rës, and the freshë sight,
 Would have ymaked any heartë light
 That ever was born, but if¹ too great sicknéss
 Or too great sorrow held it in distress,
 So full it was of beauty and pleasance.

¹ Unless.

² Begun.

And after dinner gonnen² they to dance 11230
 And sing also, save Dorigen alone,
 Which made alway her cómplaint and her moan,
 For she ne saw him on the dancë go,
 That was her husband, and her love also:
 But nathëless she must a time abide,
 And with good hopë let her sorrow slide.

Upon this dance, amongës other men,
 Danced a squier before Dorigen,

That fresher was and jollier of array,	11239	
As to my doom, ¹ than is the month of May.		¹ Judgment.
He singeth, danceth, passing any man,		
That is or was since that the world began;		
Therewith he was, if men should him describe,		
One of the bestë-faring ² men on live,		² Best-looking.
Young, strong, and virtuous, and rich, and wise,		
And well belov'd, and holden in great prise. ³		³ Praise.
And shortly, if the sooth I tellen shall,		
Unweeting ⁴ of this Dorigen at all,		⁴ Unknown.
This lusty squier, servant to Venus,		
Which that ycleped was Aurelius,	11250	
Had lov'd her best of any creature		
Two year and more, as was his áventure: ⁵		⁵ Fortune.
But never durst he tell her his grievánce,		
Withouten cup he drank all his penáncë.		
He was despaired, nothing durst he say,		
Save in his songës somewhat would he 'wray ⁶		⁶ Betray.
His woe, as in a general complaining;		
He said, he lov'd, and was belov'd nothing.		
Of suchë matter made he many lays,		
Songës, complaintës, roundels, virëlays;	11260	
How that he durstë not his sorrow tell,		
But languisheth, as doth a Fury in hell;		
And die he must, he said, as did Echo		
For Narcissus, that durst not tell her woe.		
In other manner than ye hear me say,		
Ne durst he not to her his woe bewray,		
Save that paráventure sometime at dances,		
There ⁷ youngë folk keepen their observáncës,		⁷ Where.
It may well be he looked on her face		
In such a wise, as man that asketh grace,	11270	
But nothing wistë she of his intent.		
Nathless it happen'd, ere they thennës went,		

I say, when ye have made the coast so clean 11307

Of rockës, that there n'is no stone yseen,

Then will I love you best of any man,

Have here my truth, in all that ever I can ;

For well I wot that it shall never betide.

Let such follý out of your heartë glide.

What deintee¹ should a man have in his life

¹ Value.

For to go love another mannë's wife,

That hath her body when that ever him liketh ?'

Aurelius full often sorë siketh ;²

² Sigheth.

'Is there none other grace in you?' quod he.

'No, by that Lord,' quod she, 'that maked me.'

Woe was Aurelie when that he this heard,

And with a sorrowful heart he thus answór'd. 11320

'Madám,' quod he, 'this were an impossíble.

Then must I die of sudden death horribble.'

And with that word he turned him anon.

Then come her other friendës many one,

And in the alleys roamed up and down,

And nothing wist of this conclusión,

But suddenly begunnen revel new,

Till that the brightë sun had lost his hue,

For th' órizon had reft the sun his light ;

(This is as much to say as it was night ;) 11330

And home they go in mirth and in solas ;³

³ Enjoyment.

Save only wretch Aurelius, alas!

He to his house is gone with sorrowful heart.

He saith, he may not from his death astart.⁴

⁴ Escape.

Him seemeth, that he felt his heartë cold.

Up to the heaven his handës 'gan he hold,

And on his kneës bare he set him down,

And in his raving said his orisoún.⁵

⁵ Prayer.
⁶ Wandered.

For very woe out of his wit he braid,⁶

⁷ Knew not.

He n'istë⁷ what he spake, but thus he said ; 11340

	With piteous heart his plaint hath he begun	11341
	Unto the gods, and first unto the Sun.	
	He said; 'Apollo! God and governour	
	Of every plantē, herbē, tree, and flow'r,	
	That givest after thy declinatiōn	
	To each of them his time and his season,	
¹ Dwelling.	As that thine harbour ¹ changeth low and high;	
	Lord Phœbus! cast thy merciable eye	
² Lost.	On wretch Aurelie, which that am but lorn. ²	
	Lo, lord, my lady hath my death ysworn	11350
³ Unless.	Withouten guilt, but ³ thy benignity	
	Upon my deadly heart have some pity.	
⁴ Please.	For well I wot, Lord Phœbus, if you lest, ⁴	
	Ye may me helpen, save my lady, best.	
⁵ Describe.	Now voucheth safe, that I may you devise ⁵	
⁶ Helped.	How that I may be help ⁶ and in what wise.	
⁷ Bright.	'Your blissful sister, Lucina the sheen, ⁷	
	That of the sea is chief goddess and queen,	
	Though Neptunus have deity in the sea,	
	Yet emperess aboven him is she:	11360
	Ye know well, lord, that right as her desire	
⁸ Quickened.	Is to be quick'd ⁸ and lighted of your fire,	
	For which she foll'weth you full busily,	
	Right so the sea desireth naturally	
	To follow her, as she that is goddëss	
	Both in the sea and rivers more and less.	
	Wherefore, Lord Phœbus, this is my request,	
⁹ Cause.	Do this mirácle, or do ⁹ mine heartē brest; ¹⁰	
¹⁰ Burst.	That now next at this oppositiōn,	
	Which in the sign shall be of the Liōn,	11370
	As prayeth her so great a flood to bring,	
	That five fathóm at least it overspring	
	The highest rock in Armoric' Bretaigne,	
	And let this flood enduren yearēs twain:	

Then certes to my lady may I say, 11375
Holdeth your hest,¹ the rockës be away.

¹ Promise.

Lord Phœbus, this mirácle do for me,
Pray her she go no faster course than ye;
I say this, prayeth your sister that she go
No faster course than ye these yearës two: 11380

Then shall she be even at full alway,
And spring-flood lasten bothë night and day.
And but she vouchësafe in such mannère
To granten me my sovereign lady dear,
Pray her to sinken every rock adown
Into her owen darkë regioún
Under the ground, there Pluto dwelleth in,
Or nevermore shall I my lady win.

‘Thy temple in Delphos will I barefoot seek.
Lord Phœbus! see the tearës on my cheek, 11390
And on my pain have some compassioun.’
And with that word, in sorrow he fell adown,
And longë time he lay forth in a trance.
His brother, which that knew of his penánce,
Up caught him, and to bed he hath him brought.
Despaired in this torment and this thought
Let I this woful créaturë lie;
Choose he for me whether he will live or die.

Arviragus with health and great honóur
(As he that was of chivalry the flow’r) 11400
Is comen home, and other worthy men:
Oh, blissful art thou now, thou Dorigen!
Thou hast thy lusty husband in thine arms,
The freshë knight, the worthy man of arms,
That loveth thee, as his own heartë’s life:
Nothing list him to be imaginatif,²
If any wight had spoke, while he was out,
To her of love; he had of that no doubt;

² He cared
not to
fancy.

¹ Inclinet.
eth.

He not intendeth¹ to no such mattére, 11409
But danceth, jousteth, and maketh merry cheer.
And thus in joy and bliss I let them dwell,
And of the sick Aurelius will I tell.

In languor and in torment furious
Two year and more lay wretch Aurelius,
Ere any foot on earth he mightë gon;
Nor comfort in this time ne had he none,
Save of his brother, which that was a clerk.
He knew of all this woe and all this werk;
For to none other créature cértain
Of this matter he durstë no word sayn; 11420

Under his breast he bare it more secree,
Than e'er did Pamphilus for Galatee.
His breast was whole withouten for to seen,
But in his heart aye was the arrow keen,
And well ye know that of a sursanure*
In surgery is perilous the cure,
But² men might touch the arrow or come thereby.

His brother weepeth and wailleth privily,
Till at the last him fell in rémembrance,
That while he was at Orleans in France, 11430

As youngë clerkës, that be likerous³
To readen artës that be curious,
Seeken in every halk⁴ and every hern⁵
Particular sciénces for to learn,

He him remember'd, that upon a day
At Orleans in study a book he say⁶

Of magic natural, which his fellow,
That was that time a bachelor of law,
All⁷ were he there to learn another craft,
Had privily upon his desk ylaft; 11440
Which book spake much of opératións

* 'A sursanure:' Wound healed on the surface.

² Except.

³ Eager.

⁴ Hole.

⁵ Corner.

⁶ Saw.

⁷ Though.

Touching the eight-and-twenty mansións 11442

That 'longen to the Moon, and such follý

As in our dayës n'is not worth a fly:

For holy church's faith, in our believe,

Ne suff'reth no illusion us to grieve.

And when this book was in his rémembrance,

Anon for joy his heartë 'gan to dance,

And to himself he sayed privily;

'My brother shall be warish'd¹ hastily:

11450 ¹ Cured.

For I am siker² that there be sciénces,

² Sure.

By which men maken divers appearances,

Such as these subtle tragetourës³ play.

³ Players.

For oft at feastës have I well heard say,

That tragetours, within an hallë large,

Have made come in a water and a barge,

And in the hallë rowen up and down.

Sometime hath seemed come a grim liouín,

And sometime flow'rës spring as in a mead,

Sometime a vine, and grapës white and rede, 11460

Sometime a castle all of lime and stone,

And when them liketh, voideth it anon:

Thus seemeth it to every mannë's sight.

'Now then conclude I thus; if that I might

At Orleans some oldë fellow find,

That hath these Moonë's mansións in mind,

Or other magic natural above,

He should well make my brother have his

love.

For with an ápppearance a clerk may make

To mannë's sight, that all the rockës blake 11470

Of Bretagne were yvoided every one,

And shippës by the brinkë come and gon,

And in such form endure a day or two:

Then were my brother warish'd of his woe,

¹ Promise.	Then must she needës holden her behest, ¹	11475
² Least.	Or ellës he shall shame her at the lest. ²	
	What should I make a longer tale of this? Unto his brother's bed he comen is, And such comfört he gave him, for to gon To Orleans, that he up start anon,	11480
³ Gone.	And on his way forthward then is he fare, ³	
⁴ Relieved.	In hope for to be lissed ⁴ of his care. When they were come almost to that city, But if it were a two furlong or three, A young clerk roaming by himself they met, Which that in Latin thriftily ⁵ them gret. ⁶	
⁵ Shortly. ⁶ Greeted.	And after that he said a wonder thing; 'I know,' quod he, 'the cause of your coming:' And ere they farther any footë went, He told them all that was in their intent.	11490
⁷ Days.	This Breton clerk him asked of fellows, The which he had yknown in oldë dawes, ⁷ And he answór'd him that they deadë were, For which he wept full often many a tear. Down off his horse Aurelius light anon, And forth with this magicián is gone Home to his house, and made them well at ease: Them lacked no vitáille that might them please. So well-arrayed house as there was one, Aurelius in his life saw never none.	11500
	He shewed him, ere they went to suppére, Forestës, parkës, full of wildë deer. There saw he hartës with their hornës high, The greatest that were ever seen with eye. He saw of them an hundred slain with hounds, And some with arrows bled of bitter wounds. He saw, when voided were the wildë deer,	

These falconers upon a fair rivére,
That with their hawkës have the heron slain. 11508

Then saw he knightës jousten in a plain.
And after this he did him such pleasáncé,
That he him shew'd his lady on a dance,
On which himselven danced, as him thought.
And when this master, that this magic wrought,
Saw it was time, he clapp'd his handës two,
And, farewell, all the revel is ago.
And yet removed they never out of the house,
While they saw all these sightës marvellous;
But in his study, there¹ his bookës be,
They saten still, and no wight but they three. 11520

¹ Where.

To him this master called his squier,
And said him thus, 'May we go to supper?
Almost an hour it is, I undertake,
Since I you bade our supper for to make,
When that these worthy men wenten with me
Into my study, there my bookës be.'

'Sir,' quod this squier, 'when it liketh you,
It is all ready, though ye will right now.'

'Go we then sup,' quod he, 'as for the best;
These amorous folk sometimë must have rest.' 11530

At after supper fell they in treaty
What summë should this master's guerdon be,
To remove all the rockës of Bretagne,
And eke from Geronde to the mouth of Seine.

He made it strange,² and swore, so God him save,
Less than a thousand pound he would not have,
Ne gladly for that sum he would not gon.³

² A difficulty.

³ Go.

Aurelius with blissful heart anon
Answered thus; 'Fie on a thousand pound!
This widë world, which that men say is round, 11540
I would it give, if I were lord of it.

- ¹ Pledged. This bargain is full-drive, for we be knit;¹ 11542
Ye shall be payed truly by my truth.
- ² Sloth. But looketh, for no negligence or slouth,²
Ye tarry us here no longer than to-morrow.’
- ³ For a pledge. ‘Nay,’ quod this clerk, ‘have here my faith to borrow.’³
To bed is gone Aurelius when him lest,
And well-nigh all that night he had his rest,
What for his labour, and his hope of bliss,
- ⁴ Relief. His woful heart of penance had a liss.⁴ 11550
Upon the morrow when that it was day,
To Bretagne tooken they the rightë way,
Aurel’, and this magician him beside,
- ⁵ Where. And be descended there⁵ they would abide:
And this was, as the bookës me remember,
The coldë frosty season of December.
- ⁶ A kind of brass. Phœbus wax’d old, and hued like laton,⁶
That in his hotë declinaciön
Shone as the burned gold, with streamës bright;
But now in Capricorn adown he light, 11560
Where as he shone full pale, I dare well sayn.
The bitter frostës with the sleet and rain
Destroyed have the green in every yard.
Janus sits by the fire with double beard,
And drinketh of his bugle horn the wine:
Before him stands brawn of the tusked swine,
And *nowel** crieth every lusty man.
- Aurelius in all that ever he can,
Doth to his master cheer and reverence,
And prayeth him to do his diligence 11570
To bringen him out of his painë’s smart,
Or with a sword that he would slit his heart.
- ⁷ Pity. This subtle clerk such ruth⁷ hath on this man,
That night and day he speed’th him, that he can,

* ‘*Nowel*:’ A festive cry. See note.

To wait a time of his conclusiön; 11575
 This is to say, to make illusiön,
 By such an ápppearance or jugglery,
 (I can¹ no termës of astrology,) ¹ Know.
 That she and every wight should ween and say,
 That of Bretagne the rockës were away, 11580
 Or ellës they were sunken under ground.
 So at the last he hath his time yfound
 To make his japës² and his wretchedness ² Tricks.
 Of such a superstitious cursedness.
 His tables Toletanës forth he brought
 Full well corrected, that there lacked nought,
 Neither his collect, nor his expanse years,
 Neither his rootës, nor his other gears,
 As be his centres, and his arguments,
 And his proportional convenients 11590
 For his equatiöns in every thing.
 And by his eightë spheres in his working,
 He knew full well how far Alnath was shove
 From the head of thilk fix³ Aries above, ³ That
 That in the ninthë sphere consider'd is. fixed.
 Full subtley he calculed all this.
 When he had found his firstë mansiön,
 He knew the remnant by proportiön;
 And knew the rising of his moonë well,
 And in whose face, and term, and every deal; 11600
 And knew full well the moonë's mansiön
 Accordant to his operatiön;
 And knew also his other observánces,
 For such illusions and such meschances,⁴ ⁴ Mis-
 As heathen folk used in thilkë days. chiefs.
 For which no longer maketh he delays,
 But through his magic, for a day or tway,
 It seemed all the rockës were away.

Aurelius, which that despaired is, 11609
 Whether he shall have his love, or fare amiss,
 Awaiteth night and day on this miracle:
 And when he knew that there was no obstacle,
 That voided were these rockes every one,
 Down to his master's feet he fell anon,
 And said; 'I, woful wretch Aurelius,
 Thank you, my lord, and lady mine Venus,
 That me have holpen from my cares cold.'
 And to the temple his way forth hath he hold,
 There as he knew he should his lady see.
 And when he saw his time, anon right he 11620
 With dreadful¹ heart and with full humble chere²
 Saluted hath his sovereign lady dear.

¹ Fearful.
² Deportment.

'My rightful Lady,' quod this woful man,
 'Whom I most dread, and love, as I best can,
 And lothest were of all this world displease,
 N'ere³ it that I for you have such disease,⁴
 That I must die here at your foot anon,
 Nought would I tell how me is woe-begone.
 But certes either must I die or 'plain;
 Ye slay me guiltless for very pain. 11630
 But of my death though that ye have no ruth,
 Aviseth you, ere that ye break your truth:
 Repenteth you for thilkē God above,
 Ere ye me slay, because that I you love.
 For, Madam, well ye wot what ye have hight;⁵
 Not that I challenge anything of right
 Of you, my sovereign lady, but of grace;
 But in a garden yond', in such a place,
 Ye wot right well what ye belighten me,
 And in mine hand your truthē plighten ye, 11640
 To love me best; God wot ye sayed so,
 Although that I unworthy be thereto;

³ Were not.
⁴ Uneasiness.

⁵ Promised.

Madám, I speak it for the honour of you, 11643
 More than to save my heartë's life right now :
 I have done so as ye commanded me,
 And if ye vouchësafe, ye may go see.
 Do as you list, have your behest in mind,
 For, quick or dead, right there ye shall me find :
 In you li'th all to do¹ me live or dey,
 But well I wot the rockës be away.' 11650

¹ Cause.

He tak'th his leave, and she astonied stood ;
 In all her facë n'as² one drop of blood :
 She weened never have come in such a trap.

² Was not.

'Alas !' quod she, 'that ever this should hap !
 For ween'd I never by possibility,
 That such a monster or marvail might be ;
 It is against the process of natüre.'

And home she go'th a sorrowful creatüre,
 For very fear unnethes³ may she go.

³ Scarcely.

She weepeth, waileth, all a day or two, 11660
 And swooneth, that it ruthë was to see :
 But why it was, to no wight toldë she,
 For out of town was gone Arviragus.
 But to herself she spake, and sayed thus,
 With facë pale, and with full sorry cheer,
 In her complaint, as ye shall after hear.

'Alas !' quod she, 'on thee, Fortune, I 'plain,
 That unware hast me wrapped in thy chain :
 From which to 'scapen, wot I no succour,
 Save only death, or ellës dishonour : 11670

One of these two behoveth me to choose.

But nathëless, yet had I lever⁴ lose

⁴ Rather.

My life, than of my body have a shame,

Or know myselven false, or lose my name ;

And with my death I may be quit ywis.⁵

⁵ Certainly.

Hath there not many a noble wife ere this,

And many a maid yslain herself, alas! 11677
 Rather than with her body do trespass?
 Yes, certes; lo, these stories bear witness.

‘When thirty tyrants full of cursedness
 Had slain Phidon in Athens at the feast,
 They commanded his daughters for t’ arrest,
 And bringen them before them in despite
 All naked, to fulfil their foul delight;
 And in their father’s blood they made them dance
 Upon the pavement, God give them mischance.
 For which these woful maidens full of dread,
 Rather than they would lose their maidenhead,
 They privily been start into a well,
 And dreint¹ themselven, as the bookës tell. 11690

‘They of Messenë let inquire and seek
 Of Lacedomie fifty maidens eke,
 On which they woulden do their lechery:
 But there was none of all that company
 That she n’as slain, and with a glad intent
 Chose rather for to dien, than assent
 To be oppressed of their maidenhead.
 Why should I then to dien be in dread?

‘Lo, eke the tyrant Aristoclides,
 That lov’d a maid hight Stimphalides, 11700
 When that her father slain was on a night,
 Unto Diana’s temple go’th she right,
 And hent² the image in her handës two,
 From which imaginë would she never go,
 No wight her handës might off it arrace,³
 Till she was slain right in the selvë place.

‘Now since that maidens hadden such despite
 To be defouled with man’s foul delight,
 Well ought a wife rather herselven sle,⁴
 Than be defouled, as it thinketh me. 11710

¹ Drowned.² Took.³ Pull.⁴ Slay.

‘What shall I say of Hasdrubalë’s wife, 11711
That at Carthage bereft herself her life?
For when she saw that Romans won the town,
She took her children all, and skipt adown
Into the fire, and chose rather to die,
Than any Roman did her villainy.

‘Hath not Lucrece yslain herself, alas!
At Romë, when that she oppressed was
Of Tarquin? for her thought it was a shame
To liven, when she haddë lost her name. 11720

‘The seven maidens of Milesie also
Have slain themselves for very dread and woe,
Rather than folk of Gaul them should oppress.

‘More than a thousand stories, as I guess,
Could I now tell as touching this mattére.

‘When Abradate was slain, his wife so dear
Herselven slew, and let her blood to glide
In Abradatë’s woundës, deep and wide,
And said, “My body at the leastë way
There shall no wight defoulen, if I may.” 11730

‘What should I more examples hereof sayn?
Since that so many have themselven slain
Well rather than they would defouled be,
I will conclude that it is bet¹ for me
To slay myself than be defouled thus.
I will be true unto Arviragus,
Or ellës slay myself in some mannére,
As did Demotionë’s daughter dear,
Because she wouldë not defouled be.

¹ Better.

‘O Sedasus, it is full great pity 11740
To readen how thy daughters died, alas!
That slew themselven for such manner cas.²

² Chance.

‘As great a pity was it, or well more,
The Theban maiden, that for Nicanore

Herselven slew, right for such manner woe. 11745

Another Theban maiden did right so,
For one of Macedon had her oppress'd,
She with her death her maidenhead redress'd.

‘What shall I say of Niceratës’ wife,
That for such case bereft herself her life? 11750

¹ Chose.

‘How true was eke to Alcibiades
His love, that for to dien rather chees,¹
Than for to suffer his body unburied be?

² For
‘what.’

‘Lo, which² a wife was Alcest’ eke?’ quod she.
‘What saith Homér of good Penelope?
All Greecë knoweth of her chastity.

‘Pardie, of Laodomia is written thus,
That when at Troy was slain Protesilaus,
No longer would she live after his day.

‘The same of noble Portia tell I may; 11760
Withouten Brutus couldë she not live,
To whom she had all whole her heartë give.

‘The perfect wifehood of Artemisie
Honoured is throughout all Barbarie.

‘O Teuta queen, thy wifely chastity
To allë wivës may a mirror be.’

³ Die.

Thus plained Dorigen a day or tway,
Purposing ever that she wouldë dey;³
But nathëless upon the thirdë night
Home came Arviragus, the worthy knight, 11770
And asked her why that she wept so sore?
And she ’gan weepen ever longer the more.

‘Alas,’ quod she, ‘that ever I was yborn!
’Thus have I said,’ quod she, ‘thus have I
sworn.’

⁴ Deport-
ment.

And told him all, as ye have heard before:
It needeth not rehearse it you no more.

This husband with glad chere,⁴ in friendly wise,

Answer'd and said, as I shall you devise. 11778

'Is there ought ellës, Dorigen, but this?'

'Nay, nay,' quod she, 'God help me so, as wis¹
This is too much, and² it were Goddë's will.'

'Yea, wife,' quod he, 'let sleepen that is still,
It may be well par'venture yet to-day.

Ye shall your truthë holden, by my fay.

For God so wisly³ havë mercy' on me,

I had well lever⁴ sticked for to be,

For very love which that I to you have,

But if ye should your truthë keep and save.

Truth is the highest thing that man may keep.'

But with that word he burst anon to weep, 11790

And said; 'I you forbid on pain of death,

That never while you lasteth life or breath,

To no wight tell ye this misaventure;

As I may best I will my woe endure;

Nor make no countenance of heaviness,

That folk of you may deemen harm or guess.'

And forth he clep'd a squier and a maid.

'Go forth anon with Dorigen,' he said,

'And bringeth her to such a place anon.'

They take their leave, and on their way they gon:

But they ne wisten why she thither went, 11801

She n'oldë⁵ no wight tellen her intent.

This squier, which that hight Aurelius,

On Dorigen that was so amorous,

Of áventurë happen'd her to meet

Amid the town, right in the quickest⁶ street,

As she was bound to go the way forthright

Toward the garden, there as she had hight.⁷

And he was to the gardenward also;

For well he spied when she wouldë go 11810

Out of her house, to any manner place:

¹ Assured-ly.
² If.

³ Certainly.
⁴ Rather.

⁵ Would not.

⁶ Readiest.

⁷ Promised.

But thus they met of aventure or grace, 11812
 And he saluteth her with glad intent,
 And asketh of her whitherward she went.

And she answered, half as she were mad,
 ‘Unto the garden, as mine husband bade,
 My truthē for to hold, alas! alas!’

Aurelius ’gan wonder on this case,
 And in his heart had great compassiōn
 Of her, and of her lamentatiōn, 11820

And of Arviragus, the worthy knight,
 That bade her holden all that she had hight,
 So loth him was his wife should break her truth.

And in his heart he caught of it great ruth,
 Considering the best on every side,

¹ Rather.

That from his lust yet were him lever¹ abide,
 Than do so high a churlish wretchedness

² Generosity.

Against franchise,² and allē gentleness;
 For which in fewē wordēs said he thus:

‘Madám, say to your lord Arviragus, 11830

That since I see the greatē gentleness

Of him, and eke I see well your distress,

That him were lever have shame (and that were ruth)

Than ye to me should broken thus your truth,

I had well lever ever to suffer woe,

³ Divide.

Than to depart³ the love betwixt you two.

I you release, Madám, into your hond

⁴ Security.

Quit every surēment⁴ and every bond,

That ye have made to me, as herēbeforn,

Since thilkē timē that ye were yborn. 11840

⁵ Reproach.

Have here my truth, I shall you never reprove⁵

Of no behest, and here I take my leave,

As of the truest and the bestē wife,

That ever yet I knew in all my life.’

But every wife beware of her behest;

On Dorigen rememb'reth at the lest. ¹	11846	¹ Least.
Thus can a squier do a gentle deed, As well as can a knight, withouten drede. ²		² Doubt.
She thanketh him upon her kneës bare, And home unto her husband is she fare, ³		³ Gone.
And told him all, as ye have heard me said: And, trusteth me, he was so well apaid, ⁴		⁴ Satisfied.
That it were impossible me to write. What should I longer of this case indite?		
Arviragus and Dorigen his wife In sovereign blissë ledden forth their life, Never eft ⁵ ne was there anger them between;		⁵ After.
He cherish'd her as though she were a queen, And she was to him true for evermore: Of these two folk ye get of me no more.	11860	
Aurelius, that his cost hath all forlorn, ⁶ Curseth the time that ever he was born. 'Alas!' quod he, 'alas that I behight ⁷		⁶ Lost.
Of pured gold a thousand pound of weight Unto this philosópher! how shall I do? I see no more, but that I am fordo. ⁸		⁷ Pro- mised.
Mine heritagë must I needës sell, And be a beggar; here I n'ill ⁹ not dwell,		⁸ Ruined.
And shamen all my kindred in this place, But ¹⁰ I of him may getten better grace.	11870	⁹ Will not.
But nathëless I will of him assay At certain dayës year by year to pay, And thank him of his greatë courtesy. My truthë will I keep, I will not lie.'		¹⁰ Unless.
With heartë sore he go'th unto his coffer, And broughtë gold unto this philosópher, The value of five hundred pound I guess, And him beseecheth of his gentleness To grant him dayës of the remenant,		

¹ Assured-
ly.

And said; 'Master, I dare well make avaunt, 11880
I failed never of my truth as yet.

For sikerly¹ my debtē shall be quit
Towardēs you, how so that e'er I fare
To go a begging in my kirtle bare:
But would ye vouchen safe upon surety
Two year or three for to respiten me,
Then were I well, for ellēs must I sell
Mine heritage, there is no more to tell.'

² Sigheth.

This philosópher soberly answór'd,
And sayed thus, when he these wordēs heard; 11890
'Have I not holden covenant to thee?'

'Yes, certes, well and truēly,' quod he.
'Hast thou not had thy lady as thee liketh?'
'No, no,' quod he, and sorrowfully he siketh.²
'What was the causē? tell me if thou can.'

³ Rather.

Aurelius his tale anon began,
And told him all as ye have heard before,
It needeth not rehearse it any more.
He said, 'Arviragus of gentleness
Had lever³ die in sorrow and in distress, 11900
Than that his wife were of her truthē false.

⁴ Before.

The sorrow of Dorigen he told him als,
How loth her was to be a wicked wife,
And that she lever had lost that day her life;
And that her truth she swore through innocence;
She ne'er erst⁴ had heard speak of apparence:
That made me have of her so great pity,
And right as freely' as he sent her to me,
As freely sent I her to him again:
This is all and some, there n'is no more to sayn.'

⁵ Dear.

The philosópher answer'd; 'Lev⁵ brother, 11911
Evereach of you did gently to other:
Thou art a squier, and he is a knight,

But God forbidē for his blissful might, 11914
 But if a clerk could do a gentle deed
 As well as any of you, it is no drede.¹

¹ Doubt.

‘Sir, I releasē thee thy thousand pound,
 As thou right now were crope² out of the ground,
 Ne never ere now ne haddest knowen me.

² Crept.

For, Sir, I will not take a penny of thee 11920
 For all my craft, ne nought for my travaille:
 Thou hast ypayed well for my vitaille.

It is enough, and farewell, have good day.’
 And took his horse, and forth he go’th his way.

Lordings, this question would I asken now,
 Which was the mostē free,³ as thinketh you?
 Now telleth me, ere that ye further wend.

³ Bounti-
ful.

I can no more, my tale is at an end.

THE DOCTOR'S PROLOGUE.

‘YEA, let that passen,’ quod our Host, ‘as now.
Sir Doctor of Physikë, I pray you, 11930
Tell us a tale of some honest mattére.’

‘It shall be done, if that ye will it hear,’
Said this Doctor, and his tale began anon.
‘Now, good men,’ quod he, ‘heark’neth every one.’

THE DOCTOR'S TALE.

THERE was, as telleth Titus Livius,
A knight, that cleped was Virginius,
Fulfilled of honour and worthiness,
And strong of friendës, and of great richéss.

This knight a daughter haddë by his wife,
No children had he more in all his life. 11940
Fair was this maid in excellent beauty
Aboven every wight that man may see:
For nature hath with sovereign diligence
Yformed her in so great excellence,
As though she wouldë say, ‘Lo, I, Natüre,
Thus can I form and paint a créature,

When that me list; who can me counterfeit? 11947
 Pygmalion? not, though he aye forge and beat,
 Or grave, or paintë: for I dare well sayn,
 Apelles, Xeuxis, shoulde work in vain,
 Either to grave, or paint, or forge, or beat,
 If they presumed me to counterfeit.
 For he that is the former principal,
 Hath maked me his vicar-general
 To form and painten earthly créaturës
 Right as me list, and each thing in my cure¹ is
 Under the moonë, that may wane and wax.
 And for my work right nothing will I axe;
 My lord and I be full of one accord.
 I made her to the worship of my lord; 11960
 So do I all mine other créatures,
 What colour that they have, or what figúres.
 Thus seemeth me that Nature wouldë say.

¹ Care.

This maid of agë twelve year was and tway,
 In which that Nature haddë such delight.
 For right as she can paint a lily white
 And red a rosë, right with such painture
 She painted hath this noble créature
 Ere she was born, upon her limbës free,
 Whereas by right such colours shoulde be: 11970
 And Phœbus dyed hath her tresses great,
 Like to the streamës of his burned heat.
 And if that excellent were her beauty,
 A thousand-fold more virtuous was she.
 In her ne lacked no condition,
 That is to praise, as by discretión.
 As well in ghost² as body, chaste was she:
 For which she flow' red in virginity,
 With all humility and abstinence,
 With all attemperance and patiëce, 11980

² Mind.

¹ Utter-
ance.

With measure eke, of bearing and array. 11981
 Discreet she was in answering alway,
 Though she were wise as Pallas, dare I sayn,
 Her faconde¹ eke full womanly and plain,
 No counterfeited termës haddë she
 To seemen wise; but after her degree
 She spake, and all her wordës more and less
 Sounding in virtue and in gentleness.
 Shamefast she was in maiden's shamefastness,
 Constant in heart, and ever in business 11990
 To drive her out of idle sluggardy:
 Bacchus had of her mouth right no mast'ry.
 For wine and youthë do Venús increase,
 As men in fire will casten oil and grease.
 And of her owen virtue unconstrain'd,
 She hath herself full often sick yfeign'd,
 For that she wouldë flee the company,
 Where likely was to treaten of folly,
 As is at feasts, at revels, and at dances,
 That be occasions of dalliánces. 12000

² Long
ago.

Such thingës maken children for to be
 Too soonë ripe and bold, as men may see,
 Which is full perilous, and hath been yore;²
 For all too soonë may she learnen lore
 Of boldness, when she waxed is a wife.

³ Wicked-
ness.

And ye mistresses in your oldë life,
 That lordës' daughters have in governánce,
 Ne taketh of my wordës displeasánce:
 Thinketh that ye be set in governings
 Of lordës' daughters, only for two things; 12010
 Either for ye have kept your honesty,
 Or else for ye have fallen in frailty,
 And knowen well enough the oldë dance,
 And have forsaken fully such meschance³

For evermore: therefore for Christe's sake 12015
To teach them virtue look that ye ne slake.

A thief of venison, that hath forlaft¹
His likerousness,² and all his oldë craft,
Can keep a forest best of any man:
Now keep'th them well, for if ye will ye can. 12020
Look well, that ye unto no vice assent,
Lest ye be damned for your wick'³ intent,
For whoso doth, a traitor is certáin:
And taketh keep of that I shall you sayn;
Of allë treason sovereign pestilence
Is, when a wight betrayeth innocence.

Ye fathers, and ye mothers eke also,
Though ye have children, be it one or mo,
Yours is the charge of all their surveance,⁴
While that they be under your governance. 12030
Beware, that by example of your living,
Or by your negligence in chastising,
That they ne perish: for I dare well say,
If that they do, ye shall it dear abeye.⁵
Under a shepherd soft and negligent,
The wolf hath many a sheep and lamb to-rent.

Sufficeth this example now as here,
For I must turn again to my mattére.

This maid, of which I tell my tale express,
She kept herself, her needed no mistréss; 12040
For in her living, maidens mighten read,
As in a book, every good word and deed,
That 'longeth to a maiden virtuous:
She was so prudent and so bounteous.
For which the fame out sprung on every side
Both of her beauty and her bounty⁶ wide:
That through the land they praised her each one,
That loved virtue, save envy alone,

¹ For-
saken.
² Gluttony.

³ Wicked.

⁴ Over-
sight.

⁵ Pay for.

⁶ Good-
ness.

<p>¹ Misfortune.</p>	<p>That sorry is of other mannë's weal, And glad is of his sorrow and his unhele.¹ The Doctor maketh this descriptioun.</p>	<p>12049</p>
<p>² Observing. ³ Where.</p>	<p>This maiden on a day went in the town Toward a temple, with her mother dear, As is of youngë maidens the mannére. Now was there then a justice in that town, That governor was of that regioún: And so befell, this judge his eyen cast Upon this maid, avising² her full fast, As she came forth by there³ this judgë stood:</p>	<p>12060</p>
<p>⁴ Goodness.</p>	<p>Anon his heartë changed and his mood, So was he caught with beauty of this maid, And to himself full privily he said, 'This maiden shall be mine for any man.' Anon the fiend into his heartë ran, And taught him suddenly, that he by sleight This maiden to his purpose winnen might. For certes, by no force, nor by no meed, Him thought he was not able for to speed; For she was strong of friendës, and eke she Confirmed was in such sovereign bounty,⁴</p>	<p>12070</p>
<p>⁵ Head. ⁶ Counsel.</p>	<p>That well he wist he might her never win, As for to make her with her body sin. For which with great deliberatioun He sent after a churl was in the town, The which he knew for subtle and for bold. This judge unto this churl his tale hath told In secret wise, and made him to insure, He shouldë tell it to no créature, And if he did, he shouldë lose his hede.⁵ And when assented was this cursed rede,⁶ Glad was the judge, and maked him great cheer, And gave him giftës precious and dear.</p>	<p>12080</p>

When shapen was all their conspiracy 12083
 From point to point, how that his lechery
 Performed shouldë be full subtly,
 As ye shall hear it after openly,
 Home go'th this churl, that hightë Claudius.
 This falsë judge, that hightë Appius,
 (So was his namë, for it is no fable,
 But known for an historial thing notáble; 12090
 The sentence of it sooth is out of doubt;)
 This falsë judgë go'th now fast about
 To hasten his delight all that he may.
 And so befell, soon after on a day
 This falsë judge, as telleth us the story,
 As he was wont, sat in his consistóry,
 And gave his doomës upon sundry case;
 This falsë churl came forth a full great pace,
 And saidë; 'Lord, if that it be your will,
 As do me right upon this piteous bill, 12100
 In which I 'plain upon Virginius.
 And if that he will say it is not thus,
 I will it prove, and finden good witnëss,
 That sooth is that my billë will express.'

The judge answér'd, 'Of this in his absénce
 I may not give definitive senténce.
 Let do¹ him call, and I will gladly hear;
 Thou shalt have right, and no wrong as now here.'

¹ Cause.

Virginius came to weet² the judge's will, 12110
 And right anon was read this cursed bill;
 The sentence of it was as ye shall hear:

² Know.

'To you, my lord, Sir Appius so dear,
 Sheweth your poorë servant Claudius,
 How that a knight called Virginius,
 Against the law, against all equity,
 Holdeth, express against the will of me,

My servant, which that is my thrall by right, 12117
 Which from mine house was stolen on a night
 While that she was full young, I will it preve
 By witness, lord, so that it you not grieve;
 She n'is his daughter nought, whatso he say.
 Wherefore to you, my lord the judge, I pray;
 Yield me my thrall, if that it be your will.¹
 Lo, this was all the sentence of his bill.

Virginus 'gan upon the churl behold;
 But hastily, ere he his talë told,
 And would have proved it, as should a knight,
 And eke by witnessing of many a wight,
 That all was false, that said his adversary,
 This cursed judgë wouldë nothing tarry, 12130
 Nor hear a word more of Virginus,
 But gave his judgëment, and saidë thus:

¹ Pro-
 nounce.

‘I deem¹ anon this churl his servant have;
 Thou shalt no longer in thine house her save.
 Go, bring her forth, and put her in our ward;
 The churl shall have his thrall; thus I award.’

And when this worthy knight Virginus,
 Through sentence of this justice Appius,
 Mustë by force his dearë daughter given
 Unto the judge, in lechery to liven, 12140
 He go'th him home, and set him in his hall,
 And let anon his dearë daughter call:
 And with a facë dead as ashes cold,
 Upon her humble face he 'gan behold,
 With father's pity sticking through his heart,
 All² would he from his purpose not convert.

² Al-
 though.

‘Daughter,’ quod he, ‘Virginia by thy name,
 There be two wayës, either death or shame,
 That thou must suffer, alas that I was bore!
 For never thou deservedest wherefore 12150

To dien with a sword or with a knife. 12151

O dearë daughter, ender of my life,
Which I have foster'd up with such pleasánce
That thou were ne'er out of my remembrance;
O daughter, which that art my lastë woe,
And in my life my lastë joy also,
O gem of chastity, in patiënce
Take thou thy death, for this is my sentënce;
For love and not for hate thou must be dead,
My piteous hand must smiten off thine head. 12160

Alas that ever Appius thee say!¹
Thus hath he falsely judged thee to-day.'
And told her all the case, as ye before
Have heard, it needeth not to tell it more.

'O mercy, dearë father,' quod this maid.
And with that word she both her armës laid
About his neck, as she was wont to do,
(The tearës burst out of her eyen two,)
And said, 'O goodë father, shall I die?
Is there no grace? is there no remedy?' 12170

'No certes, dearë daughter mine,' quod he.
'Then give me leisure, father mine,' quod she,
My death for to complain a little space:
For, pardie,² Jephthah gave his daughter
grace

For to complain, ere he her slew, alas!
And God it wot, nothing was her trespass,
But for she ran her father first tð see,
To welcome him with great solemnity.'
And with that word she fell aswoon anon,
And after, when her swooning was agone, 12180
She riseth up, and to her father said:
'Blessed be God, that I shall die a maid.
Give me my death, ere that I have a shame;

	Do with your child your will, a' Goddē's name. And with that word she prayed him full oft,	12185
	That with his sword he wouldē smite her soft; And with that word, aswoon again she fell. Her father, with full sorrowful heart and will,	
¹ Took.	Her head off smote, and by the top it hent, ¹ And to the judge he 'gan it to present,	12190
² Judgment.	As he sat yet in doom ² in consistóry. And when the judge it saw, as saith the story,	
³ Hang up.	He bade to take him, and anhang ³ him fast.	
⁴ Thrust.	But right anon a thousand people in thrust ⁴ To save the knight, for ruth and for pity, For knowen was the false iniquity. The people anon had suspéct in this thing By manner of the churlē's challenging, That it was by the assent of Appius; They wisten well that he was lecherous.	12200
	For which unto this Appius they gon, And cast him in a prison right anon, Whereas he slew himself: and Claudius, That servant was unto this Appius, Was doomed for to hang upon a tree; But that Virginius of his pity So prayed for him, that he was exiled, And ellēs certes had he been beguiled: The remnant were anhangēd, more and less, That were consentant of this cursedness.	12210
	Here men may see how sin hath his mérit: Beware, for no man wot whom God will smite In no degree, nor in which manner wise The worm of consciencē may agrise ⁵ Of wicked life, though it so privy be,	
⁴ Cause to tremble.		

That no man wot thereof, save God and he: 12216
For be he lewëd¹ man or ellës lear'd,²
He n'ot³ how soon that he shall be afear'd,
Therefore I redë⁴ you this counsel take,
Forsaketh sin, ere sinnë you forsake.

- ¹ Ignorant.
² Learned.
³ Knows
not.
⁴ Advise.

THE PARDONER'S PROLOGUE.

- | | | |
|--|---|--------------|
| <p>¹ Mad.</p> | <p>Our Hostë 'gan to swear as he were wood;¹</p> | <p>12221</p> |
| | <p>' Harrow! (quod he) by nailës and by blood,
This was a false churl, and a false justíce.
As shameful death, as heartë can devise,
Come to these judges and their advocas.²</p> | |
| <p>² Counsel-
lors.
³ Never-
theless.
⁴ Innocent.</p> | <p>Algate³ this sely⁴ maid is slain, alas!
Alas! too dear about she her beauty.
Wherefore I say, that all day man may see,
That giftës of fortúne and of natúre
Be cause of death to many a créature.</p> | <p>12230</p> |
| | <p>Her beauty was her death, I dare well sayn;
Alas! so piteously as she was slain.
Of bothë giftës, that I speak of now,
Men have full often more for harm than prow.⁵</p> | |
| <p>⁵ Profit.</p> | <p>' But truëly, mine owen master dear,
This was a piteous talë for to hear :</p> | |
| <p>⁶ No mat-
ter.</p> | <p>But nathëless, pass over; is no force.⁶
I pray to God to save thy gentle corse,
And eke thine urinals, and thy jordans,
Thine Hippocras, and eke thy Galiens,</p> | <p>12240</p> |
| <p>⁷ Box.</p> | <p>And every boist⁷ full of thy 'lectuary,
God bless them and our lady Saintë Mary.</p> | |
| <p>⁸ Thrive.</p> | <p>So may I the,⁸ thou art a proper man,</p> | |

And like a prelate, by Saint Ronian; 12244
 Said I not well? I cannot speak in term;¹
 But well I wot, thou dost² mine heart to erme,³
 That I have almost caught a cardiacle:⁴
 By *corpus Domini* but⁵ I have triacle,⁶
 Or else a draught of moist⁷ and corny ale,
 Or but I hear anon a merry tale, 12250
 Mine heart is lost for pity of this maid.
 Thou *bel amy*, thou Pardoner,' he said,
 'Tell us some mirth of japës⁸ right anon.'
 'It shall be done,' quod he, 'by Saint Ronion.
 But first (quod he) here at this alë-stake⁹
 I will both drink, and biten on a cake.'
 But right anon these gentles 'gan to cry;
 'Nay, let him tell us of no ribaldry.
 Tell us some moral thing, that we may lere¹⁰
 Some wit, and thennë will we gladly hear.' 12260
 'I grant ywis,'¹¹ quod he, 'but I must think
 Upon some honest thing, while that I drink.'

¹ By rule.² Makest.³ Grieve.⁴ Heart-ache.⁵ Unless.⁶ A remedy.⁷ New.⁸ Jokes.⁹ An ale-house sign.¹⁰ Learn.¹¹ Certainly.

THE PARDONER'S TALE.

LORDINGS, (quod he,) in churchë when I preach,
 I painë me to have an hautein¹² speech,
 And ring it out, as round as go'th a bell,
 For I can¹³ all by rotë that I tell.
 My theme is alway one, and ever was;
Radix malorum est cupiditas.

¹² Lofty.¹³ Know.

First I pronouncë whennës that I come,
 And then my bullës shew I all and some: 12270
 Our liegë lordë's seal on my patent,
 That shew I first my body to warrent,

That no man be so bold, ne priest nor clerk, 12273
Me to disturb of Christë's holy werk.

And after that then tell I forth my tales.

Bullës of popës, and of cardinales,
Of patriarchs, and bishopës I shew,
And in Latín I speak a wordës few,

¹ Colour.

To saffron¹ with my predicatiön,

And for to stir men to devotiön.

12280

Then shew I forth my longë crystal stones,
Yerammed full of cloutës and of bones,

² Think.

Relics they be, as weenen² they each one.

³ Brass.

Then have I in laton³ a shoulder-bone,
Which that was of an holy Jewë's sheep.

⁴ Care.

'Good men,' say I, 'take of my wordës keep:⁴

If that this bone be wash'd in any well,

If cow, or calf, or sheep, or oxë swell,

That any worm hath eat, or worm ystung,

Take water of that well, and wash his tongue, 12290

And it is whole anon: and furthermore

Of pockës, and of scab, and every sore

Shall every sheep be whole, that of this well

Drinketh a draught; take keep of that I tell.

⁵ Owneth.

'If that the good man, that the beastës oweth,⁵

Will every week, ere that the cock him croweth,

Fasting ydrinken of this well a draught,

As thilkë holy Jew our elders taught,

His beastës and his store shall multiply.

And, Sirs, also it healeth jealousy;

12300

For though a man⁶ be fall in jealous rage,

Let maken with this water his potáge,

And never shall he more his wife mistrust,

Though he the sooth of her defaultë wist;

All⁶ had she taken priestës two or three.

⁶ Al-
though.

'Here is a mittain⁷ eke, that ye may see:

⁷ Glove.

He that his hand will put in this mittain, 12307
 He shall have multiplying of his grain,
 When he hath sowed, be it wheat or oats,
 So that he offer pence or ellës groats.

‘And, men and women, one thing warn I you:

If any wight be in this churchë now,
 That hath done sin horrible, so that he
 Dare not for shame of it yshriven¹ be:
 Or any woman, be she young or old,
 That hath ymade her husband cokëwold,
 Such folk shall have no power nor no grace
 To offer to my relics in this place.

¹ Confessed.

And whoso findeth him out of such blame,
 He will come up and offer in Goddë's name, 12320
 And I assoil him by the authority,
 Which that by bull ygranted was to me.’

By this gaud² have I wonnen year by year
 An hundred mark, since I was pardonere.

² Jest.

I standë like a clerk in my pulpit,
 And when the lewed³ people is down yset,
 I preachë so as ye have heard before,
 And tell an hundred falsë japës⁴ more.

³ Ignorant.

⁴ Tricks.

Then pain I me to stretchen forth my neck,
 And east and west upon the people I beck, 12330
 As doth a dove, sitting upon a bern:⁵

⁵ Barn.

My handës and my tonguë go so yern,⁶
 That it is joy to see my business.

⁶ Briskly.

Of avarice and of such cursedness
 Is all my preaching, for to make them free
 To give their pence, and namely unto me.
 For mine intent is not but for to win,
 And nothing for correction of sin.

I reckë never when that they be buried,
 Though that their soulës go a blackë buried. 12340

For certes many a predication 12341
 Cometh oft-time of evil intention;
 Some for pleasánce of folk, and flattery,
 To be advanced by hypocrisy;
 And some for vain-glory, and some for hate.
 For when I dare none other ways debate,
 Then will I sting him with my tonguë smart
 In preaching, so that he shall not astart
 To be defamed falsely, if that he
 Hath trespass'd to my brethren or to me. 12350
 For though I tellë not his proper name,
 Men shall well knowen that it is the same
 By signës, and by other circumstánces.
 Thus quit I folk, that do us displeasánces:
 Thus spit I out my venom under hue
 Of holiness, to seemë holy' and true.
 But shortly mine intent I will devise,
 I preach of nothing but for covetise.
 Therefore my theme is yet, and ever was,
Radix malorum est cupiditas. 12360

Thus can I preach against the samë vice
 Which that I use, and that is avarice.
 But though myself be guilty in that sin,
 Yet can I maken other folk to twin¹
 From avarice, and sore them to repent.
 But that is not my principal intent;
 I preachë nothing but for covetise.
 Of this mattére it ought enough suffice.

Then tell I them examples many one
 Of oldë stories longë time agone. 12370
 For lewed² people loven talës old;
 Such thingës can they well report and hold.
 What? trowen ye, that whilës I may preach
 And winnen gold and silver for I teach,

¹ Part.² Ignorant.

That I will live in povert' wilfully? 12375

Nay, nay, I thought it never truëly.

For I will preach and beg in sundry lands,

I will not do no labour with mine hands,

Nor make baskettës for to live thereby,

Because I will not beggen idly. 12380

I will none of the apostles counterfeit:

I will have money, woollë, cheese, and wheat,

All¹ were it given of the poorest page,

Or of the poorest widow in a villáge:

All should her children starven for famíne.

Nay, I will drink the liquor of the vine,

And have a jolly wench in every town.

But heark'neth, lordings, in conclusioun,

Your liking is that I shall tell a tale.

Now I have drunk a draught of corny ale, 12390

By God, I hope I shall you tell a thing,

That shall by reason be at your liking:

For though myself be a full vicious man,

A moral tale yet I you tellen can,

Which I am wont to preachen, for to win.

Now hold your peace, my tale I will begin.

In Flanders whilom was a company

Of youngë folk, that haunteden folly,

As hazard, riot, stewës, and tavérns;

Whereas with harpës, lutës, and gittérns,² 12400

They dance and play at dice both day and night,

And eat also, and drinkë o'er their might;

Through which they do the devil sacrifice

Within the devil's temple, in cursed wise,

By superfluity abomináble.

Their oathës been so great and so damnáble,

That it is grisly³ for to hear them swear.

¹ Al-
though.

² Guitars.

³ Dreadful.

Our blissful Lordë's body they to-tear; 12408
 Them thought the Jewës rent him not enough;
 And each of them at other's sinnë lough.

And right anon in comen tombesteres¹
 Fetis² and small, and youngë fruitesteres,³
 Singers with harpës, baudës,⁴ waferers,⁵
 Which be the very devil's officers,
 To kindle and blow the fire of lechery,
 That is annexed unto gluttony.

The holy writ take I to my witness,
 That luxury is in wine and drunkenness.

Lo, how that drunken Lot unkindely⁶
 Lay by his daughters two unwittingly, 12420
 So drunk he was he n'istë what he wrought.

Herodes, who so well the stories sought,
 When he of wine replete was at his feast,
 Right at his owen table he gave his hest⁷
 To slay the Baptist John full guiltëless.

Seneca saith a good word doubtëless:
 He saith he can no differencë find
 Betwixt a man that is out of his mind,
 And a man whichë that is drunkelew:⁸
 But that woodness,⁹ yfallen in a shrew,¹⁰ 12430
 Persevéreth longer than doth drunkenness.

O gluttonië, full of cursedness;
 O causë first of our confusiön,
 O original of our damnatiön,
 Till Christ had bought us with his blood again.
 Looketh, how dearë, shortly for to sayn,
 About¹¹ was thilkë cursed villainy:
 Corrupt was all this world for gluttony.

Adam our father, and his wife also,
 From Paradise, to labour and to woe, 12440
 Were driven for that vice, it is no drede.¹²

¹ Female
dancers.

² Neat.

³ Female
fruit-
sellers.

⁴ Joyous.

⁵ Sellers of
wafer-
cakes.

⁶ Unnatu-
rally.

⁷ Com-
mand.

⁸ Drunken.

⁹ Madness.

¹⁰ One evil-
temper-
ed.

¹¹ Purchas-
ed.

¹² Doubt.

For while that Adam fasted, as I read, 12442

He was in Paradise, and when that he
Ate of the fruit defended,¹ on a tree,
Anon he was out-cast to woe and pain.
O gluttony! on thee well ought us 'plain.

¹ Forbid-
den.

Oh! wist a man how many maladies
Follow of excessë and of gluttonies,
He wouldë be the morë measuráble
Of his dietë, sitting at his table. 12450

Alas! the shortë throat, the tender mouth,
Maketh that east and west, and north and south,
In earth, in air, in water, men to-swink,²
To get a glutton dainty meat and drink.
Of this mattér, O Paul! well canst thou treat.
Meat unto womb, and womb eke unto meat,
Shall God destroyen both, as Paulus saith.
Alas! a foul thing is it by my faith
To say this word, and fouler is the deed,
When man so drinketh of the white and rede, 12460
That of his throat he maketh his privy
Through thilkë cursed superfluity.

² Labour.

The Apostle saith, weeping full pitecusly,
There walken many', of which you told have I,
I say it now weeping with piteous voice,
That they be enemies of Christë's crois:
Of which the end is death; womb is their God.
O womb, O belly, stinking is thy cod,³
Fulfil'd of dung and of corruptioun;
At either end of thee foul is the soun'. 12470

³ A bag.

How great labour and cost is thee to find!⁴
These cookës how they stamp, and strain, and grind,
And turnen substance into accident,
To fúlfil all thy likerous talent!
Out of the hardë bonës knocken they

⁴ To sup-
ply.

¹ Sweet.

The marrow, for they casten nought away, 12476
 That may go through the gullet soft and sote:¹
 Of spicery, of leaf, of bark, and root,
 Shall be his sauce ymaked by delight
 To make him yet a newer appetite.
 But certes he, that haunteth such delices,
 Is dead, while that he liveth in those vices.

A lecherous thing is wine, and drunkenness
 Is full of striving and of wretchedness.
 O drunken man! disfigured is thy face,
 Sour is thy breath, foul art thou to embrace:
 And through thy drunken nose seemeth the soun',
 As though thou saigest aye, Samsoun! Samsoun!
 And yet, God wot, Samson drank ne'er no wine.
 Thou fallest, as it were a sticked swine: 12490

² Care.

Thy tongue is lost, and all thine honest cure,²
 For drunkenness is very sépulture
 Of mannë's wit, and his discretión.

³ Doubt.

In whom that drink hath domination,
 He can no counsel keep, it is no dread.³
 Now keep you from the white and from the red,
 And namely from the whitë wine of Lepe,
 That is to sell in Fish-street and in Cheap.
 This wine of Spainë creepeth subtly
 In other winës growing fastë by, 12500

⁴ Fumes.

Of which there riseth such fumosity,⁴
 That when a man hath drunken draughtës three,
 And weeneth that he be at home in Cheap,
 He is in Spain, right at the town of Lepe,
 Not at the Róchelle, nor at Bourdeaux town;
 And thennë will he say, Samsoun! Samsoun!

But heark'neth, lordings, one word, I you pray,
 That all the sovereign actës, dare I say,
 Of victories in the Oldë Testament,

Through very God, that is omnipotent, 12510
 Were done in abstinence and in prayére:
 Looketh the Bible, and there ye may it lere.¹

¹ Learn.

Look, Attila, the greatë conqueror,
 Died in his sleep, with shame and dishonór,
 Bleeding aye at his nose in drunkenness:
 A capitain should live in soberness.

And o'er all this, aviseth² you right well,
 What was commanded unto Lemuel;
 Not Samuel, but Lemuel say I.

² Consider.

Readeth the Bible, and find it expressly 12520
 Of wine giving to them that have justice.
 No more of this, for it may well suffice.

And now that I have spoke of gluttony,
 Now will I you defenden³ hazardry.⁴
 Hazard is very mother of leasings,⁵
 And of deceit, and cursed forswearings:
 Blaspheming of Christ, manslaughter, and waste also
 Of chattel,⁶ and of time; and furthermo
 It is reprove,⁷ and contrary of honouúr,
 For to be held a common hazardour. 12530

³ Forbid.⁴ Gaming.⁵ Lies.⁶ Property.⁷ Reproach.

And ever the higher he is of estate,
 The morë he is holden desolate.
 If that a princë useth hazardry,
 In allë governance and policy
 He is, as by commón opinión,
 Yhold the less in reputatiön.

Stilbon, that was a wise ambassador,
 Was sent to Corinth with full great honouúr
 From Calidon, to maken them alliance:
 And when he came, it happen'd him *par chance*,
 That all the greatest that were of that lond 12541
 Yplaying attë hazard he them fond.
 For which, as soon as that it mightë be,

He stole him home again to his country, 12544
 And saidē there, ‘I will not lose my name,
 Ne will not take on me so great defame,
 You for t’ ally unto no hazardors.

¹ Rather.

Sendeth some other wise ambassadors,
 For by my truthē, me were lever¹ die,
 Than I you should to hazarders ally. 12550

For ye, that be so glorious in honours,
 Shall not ally you to no hazardours,
 As by my will, nor as by my treaty.’
 This wisē philosópher thus said he.

Look eke how to the King Demetrius
 The King of Parthes, as the book saith us,
 Sent him a pair of dice of gold in scorn,
 For he had used hazard therebeforn:
 For which he held his glory and renown
 At no valúe or reputatioun. 12560

Lordēs may finden other manner play
 Honest enough to drive the day away.

Now will I speak of oathēs false and great
 A word or two, as oldē bookēs treat.
 Great swearing is a thing abominable,
 And false swearing is yet more reprovale.
 The highē God forbade swearing at all,
 Witness on Matthew: but in special
 Of swearing saith the holy Jeremie,
 Thou shalt swear sooth thine oathēs, and not lie:
 And swear in doom,² and eke in righteousness;
 But idle swearing is a cursedness. 12572

² Judg-
ment.

Behold and see, that in the firstē table
 Of highē Goddē’s hestēs³ honouráble,
 How that the second hest of him is this,
 Take not my name in idle⁴ or amiss.
 Lo, rather he forbiddeth such swearing,

³ Com-
mand-
ments.

⁴ In vain.

Than homicide, or many another thing.	12578	
I say that as by order thus it standeth;		
This knoweth he that his hests understandeth,		
How that the second hest of God is that.		
And furthermore, I will thee tell all plat, ¹		¹ Plainly.
That vengeance shall not parten from his house,		
That of his oathës is outrageous.		
'By Goddë's precious heart, and by his nails,		
And by the blood of Christ, that is in Hailes,		
Seven is my chance, and thine is cinque and trey:		
By Goddë's armës, if thou falsely play,		
This dagger shall throughout thine heartë go.'		
This fruit com'th of the bicchel bonës two,	12590	
Forswearing, ire, falseness, and homicide.		
Now for the love of Christ that for us died,		
Leteth ² your oathës, bothë great and smale.		² Leave.
But, Sirs, now will I tell you forth my tale.		
These riotourës three, of which I tell,		
Long erst ³ ere primë rung of any bell,		³ Before.
Were set them in a tavern for to drink:		
And as they sat, they heard a bellë clink		
Before a corpse, was carried to his grave:		
That one of them 'gan callen to his knave, ⁴	12600	⁴ Servant.
'Go bet,' ⁵ quod he, 'and askë readily,		⁵ A hunting phrase.
What corpse is this, that passeth here forth by:		
And look that thou report his namë well.'		
'Sir,' quod this boy, 'it needeth never a del; ⁶		⁶ Whit.
It was me told ere ye came here two hours;		
He was pardie an old fellów of yours,		
And suddenly he was yslain to-night,		
Fordrunk as he sat on his bench upright,		
There came a privy thief, men clepen ⁷ Death,		⁷ Call.
That in this country all the people slay'th,	12610	
And with his spear he smote his heart atwo,		

And went his way withouten wordës mo. 12612
 He hath a thousand slain this pestilence:
 And, master, ere you come in his preséncé,
 Methinketh that it were full necessary,
 For to beware of such an adversary:
 Be ready for to meet him evermore.
 Thus taughtë me my dame; I say no more.'

'By Saintë Mary,' said this tavernere,
 'The child saith sooth, for he hath slain this year
 Hence over a mile, within a great villáge, 12621
 Both man and woman, child, and hind, and page;
 I trow his habitatiön be there:

¹ Watchful.

To be avised¹ great wisdóm it were,
 Ere that he did a man a dishonóur.'

'Yea, Goddë's armës,' quod this riotour,
 'Is it such peril with him for to meet?
 I shall him seek by stile and eke by street.

² Worthy.

I make a vow by Goddë's dignë² bones.

³ At one.

Heark'neth, fellóws, we three be allë ones:³ 12630
 Let each of us hold up his hand to other,
 And each of us becomen other's brother,
 And we will slay this falsë traitor Death:
 He shall be slain, he that so many slay'th,
 By Goddë's dignity, ere it be night.'

Together have these three their truthës plight
 To live and dien each of them for other,
 As though he were his owen boren brother.
 And up they start all drunken in this rage,
 And forth they go towardës that villáge, 12640
 Of which the taverner had spoke befor,

⁴ Dreadful.

And many a grisly⁴ oath then have they sworn,
 And Christë's blessed body they to-rent;

⁵ Catch.

'Death shall be dead, if that we may him hent.'⁵

When they have gone not fully half a mile,

Right as they would have trodden over a stile,
An old man and a poorë with them met. 12647

This oldë man full meekely them gret,¹
And saidë thus; 'Now, lordës, God you see.'²

The proudest of these riotourës three
Answér'd again; 'What? churl, with sorry grace,
Why art thou all forwrapped save thy face?
Why livest thou so long in so great age?'

This oldë man 'gan look in his viságe,
And saidë thus; 'For I ne cannot find
A man, though that I walked into Ind,
Neither in city, nor in no villáge,
That wouldë change his youthë for mine age;
And therefore must I have mine agë still
As longë time as it is Goddë's will. 12660

Ne Death, alas! ne will not have my life.
Thus walk I like a restëless caitiff,
And on the ground, which is my mother's gate,
I knockë with my staff, early and late,

And say to her, "Leve³ mother, let me in.
Lo, how I vanish, flesh, and blood, and skin;
Alas! when shall my bonës be at rest?

Mother, with you would I changen my chest,
That in my chamber longë time hath be,
Yea, for an hairy clout to wrap in me." 12670

But yet to me she will not do that grace,
For which full pale and welked⁴ is my face.

'But, Sirs, to you it is no courtesy
To speak unto an old man villainy,

But⁵ he trespass in word or else in deed.
In holy writ ye may yourselven read;

"Against⁶ an old man, hoar upon his head,
Ye should arise:" therefore I give you rede,⁷

Ne do unto an old man no harm now,

No more than that ye would a man did you 12680
 In age, if that ye may so long abide.
 And God be with you, where ye go or ride.
 I must go thither as I have to go.'

'Nay, oldē churl, by God thou shalt not so,'
 Saidē this other hazardour anon;

'Thou partest not so lightly, by Saint John.
 Thou spake right now of thilkē traitor Death,
 That in this country all our friendēs slay'th;
 Have here my truth, as thou art his espy;

¹ Suffer for. Tell where he is, or thou shalt it aby,¹ 12690

By God and by the holy sacrament;
 For soothly thou art one of his assent
 To slay us youngē folk, thou falsē thief.'

² Pleasant. 'Now, Sirs,' quod he, 'if it be you so lief²

To finden Death, turn up this crooked way,
 For in that grove I left him, by my fay,
 Under a tree, and there he will abide;
 Nor for your boast he will him nothing hide.
 See ye that oak? right there ye shall him find.

God savē you, that bought again mankind, 12700
 And you amend!' thus said this oldē man.

And evereach of these riotourēs ran,
 Till they came to the tree, and there they found
 Of florins fine of gold ycoined round,
 Well nigh an eightē bushels, as them thought.
 No longer as then after Death they sought,
 But each of them so glad was of the sight,
 For that the florins been so fair and bright,
 That down they set them by the precious hoard.
 The worst of them he spake the firstē word. 12710

³ Joke. 'Brethren,' quod he, 'take keep what I shall say;
 My wit is great, though that I bourd³ and play.
 This treasure hath fortune unto us given

In mirth and jollity our life to liven,	12714	
And lightly as it com'th, so will we spend.		
Hey! Goddë's precious dignity! who wend ¹		¹ Thought.
To-day, that we should have so fair a grace?		
But might this gold be carried from this place		
Home to mine house, or ellës unto yours,		
(For well I wot that all this gold is ours,)	12720	
Thennë were we in high felicity.		
But truëly by day it may not be;		
Men wouldeñ say that we were thievës strong,		
And for our owen treasure do ² us hong.		² Cause.
This treasure must ycarried be by night		
As wisely and as slily as it might.		
Wherefore I rede, ³ that cut ⁴ among us all		³ Advise.
We draw, and let see where the cut will fall:		⁴ Lot.
And he that hath the cut, with heartë blith,		
Shall runnen to the town, and that full swith, ⁵	12730	⁵ Quickly.
And bring us bread and wine full privily:		
And two of us shall keepen subtly		
This treasure well: and if he will not tarrien,		
When it is night, we will this treasure carrien		
By one assent, where as us thinketh best.'		
That one of them the cut brought in his fist,		
And bade them draw and look where it would fall,		
And it fell on the youngest of them all:		
And forth toward the town he went anon.		
And all so soon as that he was agone,	12740	
That one of them spake thus unto that other;		
'Thou wottest well thou art my sworn brother,		
Thy profit will I tell thee right anon.		
Thou wost ⁶ well that our fellow is agone,		⁶ Knowest.
And here is gold, and that full great plenty,		
That shall departed be among us three.		
But nathëless, if I can shape it so,		

¹ Know
not.

That it departed were among us two, 12748
Had I not done a friende's turn to thee?'

That other answer'd, 'I n'ot¹ how that may be:
He wot well that the gold is with us tway.

What shall we do? what shall we to him say?'

'Shall it be counsel?' said the firste shrew;

'And I shall tellen thee in wordes few

What we shall do, and bring it well about.'

'I grantë,' quod that other, 'out of doubt,

That by my truth I will thee not bewray.'

'Now,' quod the first, 'thou wost well we be tway,
And tway of us shall stronger be than one.

Look, when that he is set, thou right anon 12760

Arise, as though thou wouldest with him play;

And I shall rive him through the sidës tway,

While that thou strugglest with him as in game,

And with thy dagger look thou do the same;

And then shall all this gold departed be,

My dearë friend, betwixen thee and me:

Then may we both our lustës all fulfil,

And play at dice right at our owen will.'

And thus accorded been these shrewës tway,

To slay the third, as ye have heard me say. 12770

This youngest, which that wentë to the town,

Full oft in heart he rolleth up and down

The beauty of these florins new and bright.

'O Lord!' quod he, 'if so were that I might

Have all this treasure to myself alone,

There n'is no man that liveth under throne

Of God, that shouldë live so merry as I.'

And at the last the fiend our enemy

Put in his thought, that he should poison buy,

With which he mightë slay his fellows tway. 12780

For why, the fiend found him in such living,

That he had leave to sorrow him to bring. 12782
 For this was utterly his full intent
 To slay them both, and never to repent.

And forth he go'th, no longer would he tarry,
 Into the town unto a 'pothecary,
 And prayed him that he him wouldë sell
 Some poison, that he might his rattons¹ quell,
 And eke there was a polecat in his haw,²
 That, as he said, his capons had yslaw:³ 12790
 And fain he would him wreaken,⁴ if he might,
 Of vermin, that destroyed them by night.

The 'pothecary answe'r'd, 'Thou shalt have
 A thing, as wisly⁵ God my soulë save,
 In all this world there n'is no créature,
 That eat or drank hath of this cónfecture,
 Not but the mountance⁶ of a corn of wheat,
 That he ne shall his life anon forlete;⁷
 Yea, sterve⁸ he shall, and that in lessë while,
 Than thou wilt go a pace not but a mile: 12800
 This poison is so strong and violent.'

This cursed man hath in his hand yhent⁹
 This poison in a box, and swith¹⁰ he ran
 Into the nextë street unto a man,
 And borrow'd of him largë bottles three;
 And in the two the poison poured he;
 The third he keptë cleanë for his drink,
 For all the night he shope¹¹ him for to swink¹²
 In carrying off the gold out of that place.

And when this rioter, with sorry grace, 12810
 Hath fill'd with wine his greatë bottles three,
 To his fellóws again repaireth he.

What needeth it thereof to sermon more?
 For right as they had cast his death before,
 Right so they have him slain, and that anon.

¹ Rats.² Farm-yard.³ Killed.⁴ Revenge.⁵ Surely.⁶ Amount.⁷ Give up.⁸ Die.⁹ Taken.¹⁰ Quickly.¹¹ Purpos-
ed.¹² Labour.

And when that this was done, thus spake that one;
 'Now let us sit and drink, and make us merry,
 And afterward we will his body bury.' 12818

¹ By
 chance.
² Where.

And with that word it happen'd him *par cas*,¹
 To take the bottle there² the poison was,
 And drank, and gave his fellow drink also,
 For which anon they storven³ bothë two.

³ Died.

But certes I suppose that Avicenne
 Wrote never in no canon, nor in no fenne,*
 More wonder signës of empoisoning,
 Than had these wretches two ere their ending.
 Thus ended been these homicidës two,
 And eke the false empoisoner also.

O cursedness of allë cursedness!
 O traitors homicide! O wickedness! 12830
 O glutt'ny, luxury, and hazardry!
 Thou blasphemmer of Christ with villainy,
 And oathës great, of usage and of pride!
 Alas! mankindë, how may it betide,
 That to thy Creatór, which that thee wrought,
 And with his precious heartë-blood thee bought,
 Thou art so false and so unkind,⁴ alas!

⁴ Unnatu-
 ral.

Now, good men, God forgive you your trespass,
 And ware you from the sin of avarice.

⁵ Cure.

Mine holy pardon may you all warice.⁵ 12840

⁶ Pence
 sterling.

So that ye offer nobles or sterlings,⁶
 Or ellës silver brooches, spoonës, rings.
 Boweth your head under this holy Bull.
 Come up, ye wives, and off'reth of your will;
 Your names I enter here in my roll anon;
 Into the bliss of heaven shall ye gon:

⁷ Absolve.

I you assoilë⁷ by mine high powér,

* 'Fenne:' The name of the sections of Avicenna's great work entitled
 'Canon.'

You that will offer, as clean and eke as clear 12848
 As ye were born. Lo, Sirës, thus I preach;
 And Jesus Christ, that is our soulës' leach,
 So grantë you his pardon to receive;
 For that is best, I will you not deceive.

But, Sirs, one word forgot I in my tale;
 I have relics and pardon in my mail,
 As fair as any man in Engleland,
 Which were me given by the Popë's hand.
 If any of you will of devotiön
 Offer, and have mine absolutiön,
 Come forth anon, and kneeleth here adown,
 And meekëly receiveth my pardoun. 12860

Or ellës taketh pardon, as ye wend,¹ ¹ Go.

All new and fresh at every townë's end,
 So that ye offer alway new and new,
 Nobles or pence, which that be good and true.

It is an honour to evereach that is here,
 That ye may have a suffisant pardonëre
 T' assoilen you in country as ye ride,
 For aventurës, which that may betide.
 Paráventure there may fall one or two,
 Down of his horse, and break his neck atwo. 12870

Look, which² a surety is it to you all, ² What.

That I am in your fellowship yfall,
 That may assoil you bothë more and lass,³ ³ Less.

When that the soul shall from the body pass.
 I redë⁴ that our Hostë shall begin, ⁴ Advise.

For he is most enveloped in sin.

Come forth, Sir Host, and offer first anon,

And thou shalt kiss the relics every one,

Yea for a groat; unbuckle anon thy purse.

'Nay, nay,' quod he, 'then have I Christë's curse.
 Let be,' quod he, 'it shall not be, so the ich.'⁵ 12881 ⁵ So may I thrive.

Thou wouldest make me kiss thine oldë breech,
 And swear it were a relic of a saint, 12883
 Though it were with thy fundament depaint.

¹ Found.

But by the cross, which that Saint Helen fond,¹
 I would I had thine coilons in mine hond,
 Instead of relics, or of sanctuary.
 Let cut them off, I will thee help them carry;
 They shall be shrined in an hoggë's tord.'

This Pardoner answered not a word; 12890
 So wroth he was, no word ne would he say.

'Now,' quod our Host, 'I will no longer play
 With thee, nor with none other angry man.'

But right anon the worthy Knight began,
 (When that he saw that all the people lough,)
 'No more of this, for it is right enough.

Sir Pardoner, be merry and glad of cheer;
 And ye, Sir Host, that be to me so dear,
 I pray you that ye kiss the Pardoner;

² Nearer.

And, Pardoner, I pray thee draw thee ner,² 12900
 And as we diden, let us laugh and play.'
 Anon they kiss'd, and riden forth their way.

THE SHIPMAN'S PROLOGUE.

OUR Host upon his stirrups stood anon, 12903
 And saidë; 'Good men, heark'neth every one,
 This was a thrifty talë for the nones.

Sir Parish Priest,' quod he, 'for Goddë's bones,
 Tell us a tale, as was thy forword¹ yore:

¹ Promise.

I see well that ye learned men in lore
 Can muchel good, by Goddë's dignity.'

The Parson him answér'd, '*Benedicite!*' 12910
 What aileth the man, so sinfully to swear?'

Our Host answér'd, 'O Jankin, be ye there?
 Now, good men,' quod our Host, 'heark'neth to me.
 I smell a loller² in the wind,' quod he.

² Lollard.

'Abideth for Goddë's dignë³ passiön,

³ Worthy.

For we shall have a predication:

This loller here will preachen us somewhat.'

'Nay, by my father's soul, that shall he nat,
 Saidë the Shipman; 'here shall he not preach,
 He shall no gospel glosen⁴ here nor teach.

12920 ⁴ Com-
ment.

We 'lieven all in the great God,' quod he.
 'He wouldë sowen some difficulty,

Or springen cockle in our cleanë corn.

And therefore, Host, I warnë thee beforñ,

My jolly body shall a talë tell,

¹ Stomach.

And I shall clinken you so merry a bell,
 That I shall waken all this company:
 But it shall not be of philosophy,
 Nor of physíc, nor termès quaint of law;
 There is but little Latin in my maw.¹

12926

THE SHIPMAN'S TALE.

² Sociable.

A MERCHANT whilom dwell'd at Saint Deníse,
 That richē was, for which men held him wise.
 A wife he had of excellent beauty,
 And compaignable,² and revellous was she,
 Which is a thing that causeth more dispense
 Than worth is all the cheer and reverence,
 That men them do at feastēs and at dances.
 Such salutations and countenānces
 Passen, as doth a shadow upon the wall:
 But woe is him that payen must for all.
 The sely³ husband algate⁴ he must pay,
 He must us clothe and he must us array
 All for his owen worship richēly:
 In which array we dancen jollily.

³ Simple.⁴ Never-
theless.

And if that he may not paráventure,
 Or ellēs list not such dispense endure,
 But thinketh it is wasted and ylost,
 Then must another payen for our cost,
 Or lend us gold, and that is perilous.

12940

This noble Merchant held a worthy house,
 For which he had all day so great repair
 For his largesse, and for his wife was fair,
 That wonder is: but heark'neth to my tale.

12950

Amongēs all these guestēs great and smale,

There was a monk, a fair man and a bold,	12955	
I trow a thirty winter he was old,		
That ever in one ¹ was drawing to that place.		¹ Constant-ly.
This youngë monk, that was so fair of face,		
Acquainted was so with this goodë man,		
Sithen ² that their first knowledgë began,	12960	² Since.
That in his house as familiar was he,		
As it possible is any friend to be.		
And for as muchel as this goodë man		
And eke this monk, of which that I began,		
Were bothë two yborn in one villáge,		
The monk him claimeth, as for cousinage,		
And he again him said not onës nay,		
But was as glad thereof as fowl of day;		
For to his heart it was a great pleasánce.		
Thus been they knit with etern allíance,	12970	
And each of them 'gan other for t' insure		
Of brotherhood, while that their life may dure.		
Free was Dan John, and namely of dispense		
As in that house, and full of diligence		
To do pleasance, and also great costáge:		
He not forgot to give the leastë page		
In all that house; but, after their degree,		
He gave the lord, and sithen ³ his meinee, ⁴		³ After. ⁴ Servants.
When that he came, some manner honest thing;		
For which they were as glad of his coming	12980	
As fowl is fain when that the sun upriseth.		
No more of this as now, for it sufficeth.		
But so befell, this merchant on a day		
Shope ⁵ him to maken ready his array		⁵ Purpos- ed.
Toward the town of Bruges for to fare,		
To buyen there a portiön of ware:		
For which he hath to Paris sent anon		
A messenger, and prayed hath Dan John		

That he should come to Saint Denis, and play
With him, and with his wife, a day or tway, 12990
Ere he to Bruges went, in allë wise.

This noble monk, of which I you devise,
Hath of his abbot, as him list, licence,
(Because he was a man of high prudence,
And eke an officer out for to ride,
To see their granges, and their barnës wide,)
And unto Saint Denis he cometh anon.

Who was so welcome as my lord Dan John,
Our dearë cousin, full of courtesy?

¹ Jar. With him he brought a jub¹ of malvesie,² 13000

² Malmsey.

And eke another full of fine vernage,

³ Wild-
fowl.

And volatile,³ as aye was his uságe :

And thus I let them eat, and drink, and play,
This merchant and this monk, a day or tway.

⁴ Serious-
ly.

The thirdë day this merchant up ariseth,

⁵ Consider-
eth.

And on his needës sadly⁴ him aviseth:⁵

⁶ Count-
ing-
room.

And up into his countour⁶ house go'th he,

To reckon with himselven, well may be,

Of thilkë year, how that it with him stood,

And how that he dispended had his good, 13010

And if that he increased were or non.

His bookës and his baggës many one

He lay'th before him on his counting board.

Full richë was his treasure and his hoard ;

For which full fast his countour door he shet ;

⁷ Would
not.

And eke he n'oldë⁷ no man should him let⁸

⁸ Hinder.

Of his accountës, for the meanë time :

And thus he sits, till it was passed prime :

Dan John was risen in the morrow also,

And in the garden walketh to and fro, 13020

And hath his thingës said full courteously.

This goodë wife came walking privily

Into the garden, there he walketh soft, 13023

And him saluteth, as she hath done oft:

A maiden child came in her company,

Which as her list she may govérn and gie,¹

For yet under the yardë² was the maid.

‘O dearë cousin mine, Dan John,’ she said,

‘What aileth you so rathe³ for to arise?’

‘Niecë,’ quod he, ‘it ought enough suffice 13030

Five hourës for to sleep upon a night:

But⁴ it were for an old appalled⁵ wight,

As be these wedded men, that lie and dare,⁶

As in a formë sitteth a weary hare,

Were all forstraught⁷ with houndës great and smale,

But, dearë niecë, why be ye so pale?

I trowë certes, that our goodë man

Hath you labouïred, since this night began,

That you were need to resten hastily.’

And with that word he laugh’d full merrily, 13040

And of his owen thought he wax’d all red.

This fairë wife ‘gan for to shake her head,

And sayed thus; ‘Yea, God wot all,’ quod she.

‘Nay, cousin mine, it stands not so with me:

For by that God, that gave me soul and life,

In all the realm of France is there no wife,

That lessë lust hath to that sorry play;

For I may sing alas and wala-wa!

That I was born, but to no wight (quod she)

Dare I not tell how that it stands with me. 13050

Wherefore I think out of this land to wend,

Or ellës of myself to make an end,

So full am I of dread and eke of care.’

This monk began upon this wife to stare,

And said, ‘Alas! my niecë, God forbede,

That ye for any sorrow, or any drede,

¹ Guide.

² Rod.

³ Early.

⁴ Unless.

⁵ Made
pale.

⁶ Stare.

⁷ Distract-
ed.

¹ Ruin.	Fordo ¹ yourself: but telleth me your grief, Paráventure I may in your mischief Counsel or help: and therefore telleth me All your annoy, for it shall be secrée.	13057
² Breviary.	For on my Portos ² here I make an oath,	
³ Willing or un- willing.	That never in my life, for lief nor loth, ³ Ne shall I of no counsel you bewray. ‘The same again to you,’ quod she, ‘I say. By God and by this Portos I you swear, Though men me woulden all in pieces tear, Ne shall I never, for to go to hell, Bewray one word of thing that ye me tell, Nought for no cousinage, nor alliáncé, But verily for love and affiáncé.’	13070
	Thus be they sworn, and hereupon they kiss’d, And each of them told other what them list. ‘Cousin,’ quod she, ‘if that I had a space, As I have none, and namely in this place, Then would I tell a legend of my life, What I have suffer’d since I was a wife With mine husband, all be he your cousin.’	
	‘Nay,’ quod this monk, ‘by God and Saint Martin, He n’is no morè cousin unto me, Than is the leaf that hangeth on the tree:	13080
⁴ Call.	I clepe ⁴ him so, by Saint Denis of France, To have the morè cause of acquaintáncé Of you, which I have loved specially Aboven allë women sikerly, ⁵	
⁵ Assured- ly.	This swear I you on my professioun: Telleth your grief, lest that he come adown, And hasteth you, and go’th away anon.’	
⁶ Agree- able.	‘My dearë love,’ quod she, ‘O my Dan John, Full lief ⁶ were me this counsel for to hide, But out it must, I may no longer abide.	13090

<p> 'Mine husband is to me the worstē man, That ever was since that the world began: But since I am a wife, it sit¹ not me To tellen no wight of our privity, Neither in bed, nor in none other place; God shield² I should it tellen for his grace; A wife ne shall not say of her husbānd But all honóur, as I can understand; Save unto you thus much I tellen shall: As help me God, he is nought worth at all, In no degree, the value of a fly. But yet me grieveth most his niggardy: And well ye wot, that women naturally Desiren thingēs six, as well as I. They woulden that their husbands shoulden be Hardy, and wise, and rich, and thereto free, And buxom³ to his wife, and fresh a-bed. But by that ilkē Lord that for us bled, For his honóur myselven for t' array, On Sunday next I mustē needēs pay An hundred francs, or ellēs am I lorn.⁴ Yet were me lever⁵ that I were unborn, Than me were done a slander or villainy. And if mine husband eke might it espy, I n'ere but lost; and therefore I you pray Lend me this sum, or ellēs must I dey. Dan John, I say, lend me this hundred frankēs; Pardie, I will not faillē you my thankēs, If that you list to do that I you pray. For at a certain day I will you pay, And do to you what pleasance and servíce That I may do, right as you list devise: </p>	<p>13091</p> <p>¹ Becomes.</p> <p>² Forbid.</p> <p>13100</p> <p>³ Yielding.</p> <p>13110</p> <p>⁴ Lost.</p> <p>⁵ Rather.</p> <p>13120</p>
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- ¹ Unless. And but¹ I do, God take on me vengeance, 13123
As foul as ever had Genelon* of France.'
- This gentle monk answer'd in this mannere;
'Now truëly, mine owen lady dear,
- ² Pity. I have (quod he) on you so great a ruth,²
That I you swear, and plightë you my truth,
- ³ Gone. That when your husband is to Flanders fare,³
I will deliver you out of this care, 13130
For I will bringen you an hundred francs.'
- And with that word he caught her by the flanks,
And her embraced hard, and kiss'd her oft.
'Go now your way,' quod he, 'all still and soft,
And let us dine as soon as that ye may,
For by my calender it is prime of day:
Go now, and be as true as I shall be.'
- 'Now ellës God forbidë, Sir,' quod she;
And forth she go'th, as jolly as a pie,
- ⁴ Haste. And bade the cookës that they should them hie,⁴
So that men mighten dine, and that anon. 13141
Up to her husband is this wife ygone,
And knocketh at his countour boldëly.
'*Qui est la?*' quod he. 'Peter, it am I,'
Quod she. 'What, Sir, how longë will ye fast?
How longë time will ye reckon and cast
Your summës, and your bookës, and your things?
The devil have part of all such reckonings.
- ⁵ Gift. Ye have enough pardie of Goddë's sond.⁵
Come down to-day, and let your baggës stond. 13150
Ne be ye not ashamed, that Dan John
Shall fasting all this day elengë⁶ gon?
- ⁶ Chcerless. What? let us hear a mass, and go we dine.'
'Wife,' quod this man, 'little canst thou divine

* 'Genelon:' One of Charlemagne's officers, whose treachery was the cause of the defeat at Roncevaux, for which he was torn to pieces by horses.

The curious businessse that we have : 13155

For of us chapmen, all so God me save,
And by that lord that cleped is Saint Ive,
Scarcely amongës twenty, ten shall thrive
Continually, lasting unto our age.

We may well maken cheer and good viságe, 13160

And driven forth the world as it may be,
And keepen our estate in privity,
Till we be dead, or ellës that we play
A pilgrimage, or go out of the way.

And therefore have I great necessity
Upon this quaintë¹ world t' avisen² me.

For evermore must we stand in dread
Of hap and fortune in our chapmanhead.³

'To Flanders will I go to-morrow at day,
And come again as soon as ever I may: 13170

For which, my dearë wife, I thee beseeke
As be to every wight buxom⁴ and meek,
And for to keep our good be curious,
And honestly governë well our house.

Thou hast enough, in every manner wise,
That to a thrifty household may suffice.

Thee lacketh none array, nor no vitáille;
Of silver in thy purse shalt thou not fail.'

And with that word his countour door he shet,
And down he go'th: no longer would he let; 13180

And hastily a massë was there said,
And speedily the tables were ylaid,
And to the dinner fastë they them sped,
And richëly this monk the chapman fed.

And after dinner Dan John soberly
This chapman took apart, and privily
He said him thus; 'Cousin, it standeth so,
That, well I see, to Bruges ye will go,

¹ Strange.

² Consider.

³ Trading.

⁴ Civil.

God and Saint Austin speedë you and guide. 13189

I pray you, cousin, wisely that ye ride;

Governeth you also of your diët

Attemprely,¹ and namely in this heat.

Betwixt us two needeth no strangë fare;²

Farewell, cousin, God shieldë you from care.

If any thing there be by day or night,

If it lie in my power and my might,

That ye me will command in any wise,

It shall be done, right as ye will devise.

‘But one thing ere ye go, if it may be,

I wouldë prayen you for to lend me

An hundred frankës for a week or twey,

For certain beastës that I mustë buy,

To storen with a placë that is ours,

(God help me so, I would that it were yours:)

I shall not faillë surely of my day,

Not for a thousand francs, a milë way.

But let this thing be secret, I you pray;

For yet to-night these beastës must I buy.

And fare now well, mine owen cousin dear,

Grand mercy of your cost and of your cheer.’ 13210

This noble merchant gentilly³ anon

Answer’d and said, ‘O cousin mine, Dan John,

Now sikerly⁴ this is a small request:

My gold is yourës, when that it you lest,

And not only my gold, but my chaffäre:⁵

Take what you list, God shieldë that ye spare.

But one thing is, ye know it well enough

Of chapmen, that their money is their plough.

We may creancen⁶ while we have a name,

But goodless for to be it is no game.

Pay it again, when it li’th in your ease;

After my might full fain would I you please.’ 13220

¹ Tempe-
rately.

² Ado.

³ Civilly.

⁴ Surely.

⁵ Merchan-
dise.

⁶ Borrow.

These hundred frankës set he forth anon, 13223
 And privily he took them to Dan John:
 No wight in all this world wist of this loan,
 Saving this merchant and Dan John alone.
 They drink, and speak, and roam a while and play,
 Till that Dan John rideth to his abbay.

The morrow came, and forth this merchant rideth
 To Flanders-ward, his 'prentice well him guideth,
 Till he came in to Bruges merrily. 13231

Now go'th this merchant fast and busily
 About his need, and buyeth, and creanceth;¹
 He neither playeth at the dice, nor danceth;
 But as a merchant, shortly for to tell,
 He leadeth his life, and there I let him dwell.

¹ Borrows.

The Sunday next the merchant was agone,
 To Saint Denis ycomen is Dan John,
 With crown and beard all fresh and new yshave.
 In all the house there n'as so little a knave,² 13240

² Servant-boy.

Nor no wight ellës, that he n'as full fain,
 For that my lord Dan John was come again.
 And shortly to the point right for to gon,
 This fairë wife accordeth with Dan John,
 That for these hundred francs he should all night
 Haven her in his armës bolt-upright:

And this accord performed was indeed.
 In mirth all night a busy life they lead
 Till it was day, that Dan John yede³ his way,
 And bade the meinie⁴ 'Farewell; have good day.'

³ Went.

⁴ Servants.

For none of them, nor no wight in the town, 13251
 Hath of Dan John right no suspectioun;
 And forth he rideth home to his abbay,
 Or where him list, no more of him I say.

This merchant, when that ended was the fair,
 To Saint Denis he 'gan for to repair,

¹ Merchandise.² Agreement for borrowing.³ French crowns.⁴ Took.⁵ Love.⁶ Know.⁷ Company.⁸ Glad.

And with his wife he maketh feast and cheer, 13257

And telleth her that chaffare¹ is so dear,

That needës must he make a chëvisance,²

For he was bound in a recognisance,

To payen twenty thousand shields³ anon.

For which this merchant is to Paris gone

To borrow of certain friendës that he had

A certain francs, and some with him he lad.⁴

And when that he was come into the town,

For great chiertec⁵ and great affectioun

Unto Dan John him go'th him first to play;

Not for to ask or borrow of him monëý,

But for to weet⁶ and see of his welfare,

And for to tellen him of his chaffare,

13270

As friendës do, when they be met in fere.⁷

Dan John him maketh feast and merry cheer;

And he him told again full specially,

How he had well ybought and graciously

(Thanked be God) all whole his merchandise:

Save that he must in allë manner wise

Maken a chevisance, as for his best:

And then he shouldë be in joy and rest.

Dan John answered, ' Certes I am fain,⁸

That ye in health be comen home again:

13280

And if that I were rich, as have I bliss,

Of twenty thousand shields should ye not miss,

For ye so kindly this other day

Lentë me gold, and as I can and may

I thankë you, by God and by Saint Jame.

But natheless I took unto our Dame,

Your wife at home, the samë gold again

Upon your bench, she wot it well certáin,

By certain tokens that I can her tell.

Now by your leave, I may no longer dwell;

13290

Our abbot will out of this town anon, 13291
 And in his company I mustë gon.
 Greet well our Dame, mine owen niecë sweet,
 And farewell, dearë cousin, till we meet.'

This merchant, which that was full ware and wise,
 Creanced hath, and paid eke in Paris
 To certain Lombards ready in their hond
 The sum of gold, and got of them his bond,
 And home he go'th, merry as a popinjay.
 For well he knew he stood in such array, 13300
 That needës must he win in that viäge¹
 A thousand francs, above all his costäge.²

¹ Journey.² Expense.

His wife full ready met him at the gate,
 As she was wont of old usäge algate:
 And all that night in mirthë they been set,
 For he was rich, and clearly out of debt.
 When it was day, this merchant 'gan embrace
 His wife all new, and kiss'd her in her face,
 And up he go'th, and maketh it full tough. 13309
 'No more,' quod she, 'by God ye have enough.'
 And wantonly again with him she play'd,
 Till at the last this merchant to her said.

'By God,' quod he, 'I am a little wroth
 With you, my wife, although it be me loth:
 And wot ye why? by God, as that I guess,
 That ye have made a manner strangëness
 Betwixen me and my counsín, Dan John.
 Ye should have warned me, ere I had gone,
 That he you had an hundred frankës paid
 By ready token: and held him evil apaid,³
 For that I to him spake of chevisance,⁴
 (Me seemed so as by his countenance:)
 But natheless by God our heaven king,
 I thoughtë not to ask of him no thing.

13320 ³ Satisfied.⁴ Borrow-
ing.

I pray thee, wife, ne do thou no more so. 13325
 Tell me alway, ere that I from thee go,
 If any debtor hath in mine absénce
 Ypaidë thee, lest through thy negligence
 I might him ask a thing that he hath paid.'

¹ Fright-
ened.

This wife was not aferdë¹ nor afraid, 13330

² Care.
³ Whit.

But boldëly she said, and that anon;
 'Mary! I défy that false monk Dan John,

⁴ Success.

I keep² not of his tokens never a del:³

He took me certain gold, I wot it well.

What? evil thedom⁴ on his monkë's snout!

For, God it wot, I ween'd withouten doubt,

That he had given it me, because of you,

⁵ Profit.

To do therewith mine honour and my prow,⁵

For cousinage, and eke for *bellë chere*,

That he hath had full often timës here. 13340

But since I see I stand in such disjoint,

I will answér you shortly to the point.

'Ye have more slackë debtors than am I:

For I will pay you well and readily

From day to day, and if so be I fail,

I am your wife, score it upon my tail,

And I shall pay as soon as ever I may.

For by my truth, I have on mine array,

And not in waste, bestow'd it every del.

And for I have bestowed it so well 13350

For your honóur, for Goddë's sake I say,

As be not wroth, but let us laugh and play.

⁶ Pledge.

Ye shall my jolly body have to wed;⁶

By God I n'ill not pay you but a-bed:

Forgive it me, mine owen spousë dear;

Turn hitherward and maketh better cheer.'

This merchant saw there was no remedy:

And for to chide, it n'ere but a follý,

Since that the thing may not amended be. 13359
‘Now, wife,’ he said, ‘and I forgive it thee;
But by thy life ne be no more so large;
Keep bet¹ my good, this give I thee in charge.’
Thus endeth now my tale, and God us send
Taling enough, unto our livēs’ end.

¹ Better.

THE PRIORESS'S PROLOGUE.

‘WELL said, by *corpus Domini*,’ quod our Host, 13365
 ‘Now longē may thou sailen by the coast,
 Thou gentle Master, gentle Marinere.
 God give the monk a thousand last quad year.*

¹ Trick.

Aha! fellows, beware of such a jape.¹
 The monk put in the mannē’s hood an ape, 13370
 And in his wifē’s eke, by Saint Austin.
 Draweth no monkēs more into your inn.

‘But now pass over, and let us seek about,
 Who shall now tellen first of all this rout
 Another tale:’ and with that word he said,
 As courteously as it had been a maid;

² Decide.

‘My Lady Prioressē, by your leave,
 So that I wist I should you not aggrieve,
 I wouldē deemen,² that ye tellen should
 A talē next, if so were that ye would. 13380
 Now will ye vouchēsafe, my lady dear?’

‘Gladly,’ quod she, and said as ye shall hear.

* * ‘A thousand last quad year:’ A thousand-weight of bad years.

THE PRIORESS'S TALE.

O LORD our Lord! thy name how marvellous 13383
 Is in this largë world yspread! (quod she)
 For not all only thy laud¹ precious
 Performed is by men of dignity,
 But by the mouth of children thy bounty
 Performed is, for on the breast sucking
 Sometimë shoven they thine herying.²

¹ Praise.² Praise

Wherefore in laud, as I can best and may, 13390
 Of thee and of the whitë lily flow'r,
 Which that thee bare, and is a maid alway,
 To tell a story I will do my labóur;
 Not that I may increasen her honóur,
 For she herselven is honóur and root
 Of bounty, next her son, and soulës' boot.³

³ Help.

O mother maid, O maid and mother free!⁴
 O bush unburnt, burning in Moses' sight,
 That ravished'st down from the deity,
 Through thine humbless, the ghost that in thee'
 alight:

⁴ Bounti-
ful.

Of whose virtue, when he thine heartë light,⁵ 13401
 Conceived was the Father's sapience:
 Help me to tell it to thy reverence.

⁵ Lighten-
ed, glad-
dened.

Lady! thy bounty, thy magnificence,
 Thy virtue and thy great humility,
 There may no tongue express in no sciënce:
 For sometime, Lady! ere men pray to thee,
 Thou go'st before of thy benignity,

And gettest us the light, of thy prayére,
To guiden us unto thy son so dear. 13409

¹ Skill. My conning¹ is so weak, O blissful queen,
For to declare thy greatë worthiness,
That I ne may the weightë not sustene;
But as a child of twelve month old or less,
² Scarcely. That can unnethës² any word express,
Right so fare I, and therefore I you pray,
Guideth my song, that I shall of you say.

THERE was in Asia, in a great city,
³ Jews' quarter. Amongës Christian folk a Jewery,³
Sustained by a lord of that countrý, 13420
For foul usure, and lucre' of villainy,
Hateful to Christ, and to his company:
⁴ Walk. And through the street men mighten ride and wend,⁴
For it was free, and open at either end.

A little school of Christian folk there stood
Down at the farther end, in which there were
Children an heapë come of Christian blood,
That learned in that schoolë year by year,
Such manner doctrine as men used there:
This is to say, to singen and to read, 13430
As smallë children do in their childhede.

Among these children was a widow's son,
⁵ Young clerk. A little clergion,⁵ seven year of age,
⁶ Custom. That day by day to schoolë was his won,⁶
And eke also, whereas he saw th' imáge
Of Christë's mother, had he in uságe,
As him was taught, to kneel adown, and say
Ave Maria, as he go'th by the way.

Thus hath this widow her little son ytaught
 Our blissful Lady, Christë's mother dear, 13440
 To worship aye, and he forgot it naught:
 For sely¹ childë will alway soon lere.²
 But aye, when I remember on this mattére,
 Saint Nicholas stands ever in my presence,
 For he so young to Christ did reverence.

¹ Simple.² Learn.

This little child his little book learning,
 As he sāt in the school at his primére,
 He *Alma redemptoris* heardë sing,
 As children learned their antiphonere: *
 And as he durst, he drew him nere and nere,³ 13450
 And hearken'd aye the wordës and the note,
 Till he the firstë verse coude⁴ all by rote.

³ Nearer.⁴ Knew.

Nought wist he what this Latin was to say,
 For he so young and tender was of age;
 But on a day his fellow 'gan he pray
 T' expounden him this song in his languáge,
 Or tell him why this song was in uságe:
 This pray'd he him to construe and declare,
 Full often time upon his kneës bare.

His fellow, which that elder was than he, 13460
 Answér'd him thus: 'This song, I have heard say,
 Was maked of our blissful Lady free,
 Her to salute, and eke her for to pray
 To be our help, and succour when we dey.
 I can no more expound in this mattére:
 I learnë song, I can⁵ but small grammére.'

⁵ Know.

'And is this song maked in reverence

* 'Antiphonere:' Chanting alternate verses of the Psalms.

Of Christë's mother?' said this innocent; 13468
 Now certes I will do my diligence
 To conne¹ it all, ere Christëmas be went,
 Though that I for my primer shall be shent,²
 And shall be beaten thriës in an hour,
 I will it conne, our Lady for t' honóur.'

¹ Know.² Disgraced.

His fellow taught him homeward privily
 From day to day, till he coude³ it by rote,
 And then he sung it well and boldely
 From word to word according with the note:
 Twiës a day it passed through his throat,
 To schoolëward and homeward when he went:
 On Christë's mother set was his intent. 13480

³ Knew.

As I have said, throughout the Jewery
 This little child as he came to and fro,
 Full merrily then would he sing and cry,
O Alma redemptoris, evermo:
 The sweetness hath his heartë pierced so
 Of Christë's mother, that to her to pray
 He cannot stint⁴ of singing by the way.

⁴ Cease.

Our firstë foe, the serpent Sathanas,
 That hath in Jewës' heart his waspë's nest,
 Upswell'd and said, 'O Ebraike people', alas! 13490
 Is this to you a thing that is honést,⁵
 That such a boy shall walken as him lest
 In your despite, and sing of such senténce,
 Which is against our lawë's reverence?'

⁵ Creditable.

From thennësforth the Jewës have conspired
 This innocent out of this world to chase:
 An homicidë thereto have they hired,

That in an alley had a privy place, 13498
 And as the child 'gan forthby for to pace,
 This cursed Jew him hent,¹ and held him fast,
 And cut his throat, and in a pit him cast.

¹ Seized.

I say that in a wardrope² they him threw,
 Whereas these Jewës purgen their entrail.
 O cursed folk! of Herodës all new,
 What may your evil intentë you avail?
 Murder will out, certáin it will not fail,
 And namely there³ th' honour of God shall spread:
 The blood outერიeth on your cursed deed.

² Sewer.³ Where.

O martyr souted⁴ in virginity,
 Now may'st thou sing, and followen ever in one⁵
 The whitë Lamb celestial, (quod she,) 13511
 Of which the great Evangelist Saint John
 In Patmos wrote, which saith that they that gon
 Before this Lamb, and sing a song all new,
 That never fleshly woman they ne knew.

⁴ Confirm-
 ed.
⁵ Continu-
 ally.

This poorë widow awaiteth all that night
 After her little child, and he came nought:
 For which as soon as it was dayë's light,
 With facë pale of dread and busy thought,
 She hath at school and ellëswhere him sought, 13520
 Till finally she 'gan so far espy,
 That he last seen was in the Jewery.

With mother's pity in her breast enclosed
 She go'th, as she were half out of her mind,
 To every placë, where she hath supposed
 By likelihood her little child to find:
 And ever on Christë's mother meek and kind

She cried, and at the lastē thus she wrought, 13528
Among the cursed Jewēs she him sought.

¹ Asketh.

She freyneth,¹ and she prayeth piteously
To every Jew that dwell'd in thilkē place,
To tell her, if her child went ought forthby:
They saiden, Nay; but Jesu of his grace
Gave in her thought, within a little space,
That in that place after her son she cried,
There² he was casten in a pit beside.

² Where.

O greatē God, that performest thy laud
By mouth of innocents, lo here thy might!
This gem of chastity, this emeraud,
And eke of martyrdom the ruby bright, 13540
There he with throat ycorven³ lay upright,
He *Alma redemptoris* 'gan to sing
So loud, that all the placē 'gan to ring.

³ Cut,

The Christian folk, that through the streetē went,
In comen, for to wonder upon this thing:
And hastily they for the provost sent.
He came anon withouten tarrying,
And herieth⁴ Christ, that is of heaven king,
And eke his mother, honour of mankind,
And after that the Jewēs let he bind. 13550

⁴ Praiseth.

This child with piteous lamentation
Was taken up, singing his song alway:
And with honoúr and great processión,
They carrien him unto the next abbay.
His mother swooning by the bierē lay;
Unnethēs⁵ might the people that was there
This newē Rachel bringen from his bier.

⁵ Scarcely.

With torment, and with shameful death each one
 The provost doth¹ these Jewës for to sterve,² 13559
 That of this murder wist,³ and that anon;
 He n'oldë⁴ no such cursedness observe:
 Evil shall he have, that evil will deserve.
 Therefore with wildë horse he did them draw,
 And after that he hung them by the law.

¹ Causeth.
² Die.
³ Knew.
⁴ Would
 not.

Upon his bier aye li'th this innocent
 Before the altar while the massë last:
 And after that, th' abbót with his convént
 Have sped them for to bury him full fast:
 And when they holy water on him cast,
 Yet spake this child, when sprent⁵ was th' holy
 water,
 And sang, *O Alma redemptoris mater!* 13570

⁵ Sprink-
 led.

This abbot, which that was an holy man,
 As monkës be, or ellës ought to be,
 This youngë child to conjure he began,
 And said; 'O dearë child! I halsë⁶ thee
 In virtue of the holy Trinity,
 Tell me what is thy causë for to sing,
 Since that thy throat is cut, to my seeming.'

⁶ Implore.

'My throat is cut unto my neckë-bone,'
 Saidë this child, 'and as by way of kind⁷ 13580
 I should have died, yea longë time ago:
 But Jesus Christ, as ye in bookës find,
 Will that his glory last and be in mind,
 And for the worship of his mother dear,
 Yet may I sing *O Alma* loud and clear.

⁷ Nature.

'This well⁸ of mercy, Christë's mother sweet,

⁸ Fountain.

¹ Know-
ledge.
² Leave.

I loved alway, as after my conning:¹
And when that I my lifë should forlete,²
To me she came, and bade me for to sing
This anthem verily in my dying,
As ye have heard; and, when that I had sung,
Methought she laid a grain upon my tongue.

13587

³ Bounti-
ful.

‘Wherefore I sing, and sing I must certáin
In honour of that blissful maiden free,³
Till from my tongue off taken is the grain.
And after that thus saidë she to me;
“My little child, then will I fetchen thee,
When that the grain is from thy tongue ytake:
Be not aghast, I will thee not forsake.”’

⁴ Seen.

This holy monk, this abbot him mean I,
His tongue outcaught, and took away the
grain;

13600

⁵ Flat.
⁶ Level.

And he gave up the ghost full softëly.
And when this abbot had this wonder sein,⁴
His saltë tearës trill’d adown as rain:
And groff⁵ he fell all plat⁶ upon the ground,
And still he lay, as he had been ybound.

⁷ Praising.

The convent lay eke on the pavëment
Weeping and herying⁷ Christ’s mother dear.
And after that they risen, and forth been went,
And took away this martyr from his bier,
And in a tomb of marble stonës clear
Enclosen they his little body sweet:
There⁸ he is now, God lene⁹ us for to meet.

13610

⁸ Where.
⁹ Grant.

O youngë Hugh of Lincøln! slain also
With cursed Jewës, as it is notáble,

For it n'is but a little while ago,
Pray eke for us, we sinful folk unstable,
That of his mercy God so merciáble
On us his greatë mercy multiply,
For reverence of his mother Mary.

13616

NOTES

ON

THE CANTERBURY TALES.

VER. 5583. I have already given my reasons for following the best MSS. in placing this prologue of the Wife of Bath next to the Man of Law's tale. ('Discourse,' &c., § XVI.) The want of a few verses to connect this prologue with the preceding tale was perceived long ago; and the defect was attempted to be supplied by the author of the following lines, which, in MS. B., are prefixed to the common Prologue:—

'Oure oost gan tho to loke up anon.
Gode men, quod he, herkeneth everichone;
As evere mote I drynke wyn or ale,
This marchant hath itold a mery tale,
Howe Januarie hadde a lither jape,
His wyf put in his hood an ape.
But hereof I wil leve off as now.
Dame wyf of Bathe, quod he, I pray you
Telle us a tale now nexte after this.
Sir oost, quod she, so god my soule blis,
As I fully thereto wil consente,
And also it is myn hole entente,
To done yow alle disporte as that I can.
But holde me excused; I am a woman.
I can not reherse as these clerkes kuno.
And riyt anon she hath hir tale bygunne.
Experience,' &c.

The same lines are in MSS. Bod. β and ζ . I print them here, in order to justify myself for not inserting them in the text.

Ver. 5626. 'I have wedded five:' After this verse, the six following are in MSS. C. 1, HA., C. 2, and in Edit. Ca. 2:—

'Of whiche I have pyked out the beste
Bothe of here nether purs and of here cheste.
Diverse scoles maken parfyt clerkes,
And diverse practyk in many sondry werkes
Maken the werkman parfyt sekirly:
Of five husbondes scoleryng am I,
Welcome the sixthe,' &c.

If these lines are not Chaucer's, they are certainly more in his manner than the generality of the imitations of him. Perhaps he wrote them, and afterwards blotted them out. They come in but awkwardly here, and he has used the principal idea in another place. (Merch. T., ver. 9301.)

Ver. 5657. 'The dart is set:' See 'Lydg. Boc.,' fol. xxvi.:—

'And oft it happeneth, he that hath best ron
Doth not the spere like his desert possede.'

Ver. 5677. 'I grant it well, I have none envy,
Though maidenhead prefer bigamy:'

So these two verses stand, without any material difference, in all the MSS. If they are right, we must understand 'prefer' to signify the same as 'be preferred to.' Knowing no example of such a construction, I have ventured at an alteration of the text. It might have been as well, perhaps, to have left the first line untouched, and to have corrected the second only thus:

'Though maidenhead be preferr'd to bigamy.'

Ver. 5681. 'A lord in his household:' See 2 Tim. ii. 20.

Ver. 5764. 'Writeth Ptolemy:' In the margin of MS. C. 1, is the following quotation: 'Qui per alios non corrigitur, alii per ipsum corrigentur.' But I cannot find any such passage in the 'Almageste.' I suspect that the Wife of Bath's copy of Ptolemy was very different from any that I have been able to meet with. (See another quotation from him, ver. 5906.)

Ver. 5799. 'The bacon—at Dunmow:' See Blount's 'Ant. Tenures,' p. 162, and 'P. P.,' 446. This whimsical institution was not peculiar to Dunmow. There was the same in Bretagne. 'A l'Abbaie Saint Melaine, près Rennes, y a, plus de six cens

ans sont, un costé de lard encore tout frais et non corrompu ; et neantmoins voué et ordonné aux premiers, qui par an et jour ensemble mariez ont vescu san debat, grondement, et sans s'en repentir.' ('Contes d'Eutrap.,' t. ii. p. 161.)

Ver. 5810. 'Swearen and lien : ' 'Rom. de la R.,' ver. 19013:—

'Car plus hardiment que nulz homs
Certainement jurent et mentent'

Ver. 5811. ('I say not this :') This parenthesis seems to be rather belonging to Chaucer himself than to the Wife of Bath.

Ver. 5814. 'Shall bearen them on hand : ' 'Shall make them believe falsely,' the cow is 'wood.' The latter words may either signify that the cow is 'mad,' or 'made of wood.' Which of the two is the preferable interpretation, it will be safest not to determine, till we can discover the old story to which this phrase seems to be a proverbial allusion.

Ver. 5817. 'Sir old Kaynard : ' 'Cagnard,' or 'Caignard,' was a French term of reproach, which seems to have been originally derived from 'Canis.' (Menage, in v.) In the following speech it would be endless to produce all Chaucer's imitations. The beginning is from the fragment of Theophrastus, quoted by St Jerome, c., Jovin., l. i., and by John of Salisbury, 'Polycrat.,' l. viii. c. xi. (See also 'Rom. de la R.,' ver. 8967, et suiv.)

Ver. 5882. 'Chamberere : ' A chamber-maid, Fr. (See 8695, 8853.)

'Son varlet et sa chamberiere,
Aussi sa seur et sa nourrice
Et sa mere, si moult n'est nice.'

('Rom. de la R.,' 14480.)

Ver. 5923. 'In the apostle's name : ' See 1 Tim. ii. 9.

Ver. 6042. 'Metellius : ' This story is told by Pliny ('Nat. Hist.' l. xiv. c. 13.) of one Mecenius ; but Chaucer probably followed Valerius Maximus, (l. vi. c. 3.)

Ver. 6049. 'In woman vinolent : ' 'Rom. de la R.,' 14222.

'Car puisque femme est enyvree
El n'a point en soy de deffence.'

Ver. 6065. 'Saint Joce,' or Josse : Sanctus Judocus was a

saint of Ponthieu. ('Vocab. Hagiol.,' prefixed to Menage, 'Etymol. Fr.')

Ver. 6137. 'Visitations : ' 'Rom. de la R.,' 12492 :—

'Souvent voise à la mere Eglise,
Et face visitations
Aux nopces, aux processions,
Aux jeux, aux festes, aux caroles.'—

Ver. 6151. 'Bobance : ' 'Boasting,' 'pride,' Fr. ; 'en orgueil et en bobans.' (Froissart, v. iv. c. 70.) In the Editt. it is 'bostance.' The thought in the next lines is taken from 'Rom. de la R.,' 13914 :—

'Moult a souris povre recours,
Et met en grand peril la druge,
Qui n'a qu'ung partuys à refuge.'

Ver. 6191–6194. These four lines are wanting in MSS. A., Ask. 1, 2, and several others. And so are the eight lines from ver. 6201 to ver. 6208, inclusive. They certainly might very well be spared.

Ver. 6216. 'With his fist : ' MS. A. reads, 'on the lyste ; ' and so does Ed. Ca. 2, with the addition of (what was at first a marginal gloss) 'on the cheke.' In support of this reading it may be observed, that Sir Thomas More, among many Chaucerian phrases, has this, in his 'Merry Jest of a Sergeant,' &c. :—

'And with his fist
Upon the lyst
He gave him such a blow.'

Ver. 6227. 'Open-headed : ' This is literally from Val. Max., l. vi. c. 3, 'uxorem dimisit, quod eam capite aperto foris versatam cognoverat.' He gives the reason of this severity : 'Lex enim tibi meos tantum præfinit oculos, quibus formam tuam approbes. His decoris instrumenta compara : his esto speciosa,' &c.

Ver. 6230. 'A summer-game : ' This expression, I suppose, took its rise from the summer being the usual season for games. It is used in 'P. P.,' fol. xxvii. :—

'I have lever here an harlotry, or a somers game.'

This story is also from Val. Max., l. vi. c. 3. P. Sempronius Sophus—'conjugem repudii notâ affecit, nihil aliud quam se ignorantè ludos ausam spectare.

Ver. 6253. 'Valerie, and Theophrast:.' Some account has been given of these two treatises in the 'Discourse,' &c., note * p. cxx. As to the rest of the contents of this volume, 'Hieronymus' ('Contra Jovinianum,') and 'Tertullian' ('De Pallio') are sufficiently known; and so are the Letters of Eloisa and Abelard, the Parables of Solomon, and Ovid's 'Art of Love.' I know of no 'Trotula' but one, whose book, 'Curandarum Ægreditudinum Muliebrum ante, in, et post Partum,' is printed 'int. Medicos Antiquos,' Ven. 1547. What is meant by 'Chrysippus' I cannot guess.

Ver. 6258. 'Which book was there:.' I have here departed from the MSS., which all read, 'In which book there was eke.' Perhaps, however, it might be sufficient to put a full stop after 'Jovinian.'

Ver. 6284. 'Exaltation:.' In the old astrology, a planet was said to be in its exaltation, when it was in that sign of the zodiac in which it was supposed to exert its strongest influence. The opposite sign was called its dejection, as in that it was supposed to be weakest. To take the instance in the text, the exaltation of Venus was in Pisces, (see also ver. 10587,) and her dejection, of course, in Virgo. But in Virgo was the exaltation of Mercury.

'She is the welthe and the rysynge
The lust the joy and the lykyng
Unto Mercury.'—

(Gower, 'Conf. Am.' l. vii. fol. 147.) So in ver. 10098, Cancer is called 'Jove's exaltation.'

Ver. 6303. 'Then read he:.' Most of the following instances are mentioned in the 'Epistola Valerii ad Rufinum de non Ducendâ Uxore.' See also 'Rom. de la R.,' 9140, 9615, et suiv.

Ver. 6329. 'Of Lima—and of Lucie:.' In the 'Epistola Valerii,' &c., (MS. Reg. 12, D. iii.,) the story is told thus:—'Luna virum suum interfecit quem nimis odivit: Lucilia suum quem nimis amavit. Illa sponte miscuit aconita: hæc decepta furorem propinavit pro amoris poculo.' 'Lima' and 'Luna' in many MSS. are only distinguishable by a small stroke over the 'i,' which may be easily overlooked where it is, and supposed where it is not.

Ver. 6339. 'Latumeus:' In MSS. Ask. 1, 2, it is 'Latynius;' in the 'Epistola Valerii,' just cited, 'Pavorinus flens ait Arrio.'

Ver. 6355. 'Mo proverbs:' For the following aphorisms see Prov. xx. 9, 19, xi. 22. The observation in ver. 6364 is in Herodotus (B. i. p. 5, Ed. Wesseling).

Ver. 6414. 'The Sompnour heard the Friar gale:' The same word occurs below, ver. 6918, 'and let the Sompnour gale.' In both places it seems to be used metaphorically. 'Galan,' Sax., signifies 'canere.' It is used literally in the 'Court of Love,' ver. 1357, where the nightingale is said 'to cry and gale.' Hence its name, 'Nightegale,' or 'Nightengale.' In the Iceland., 'at gala' is 'ululare, Galli more exclamare;' and 'Hana gal;' 'Gallicinium.' (Gudm. And. Lex. Iceland.)

Ver. 6439. 'King Artour:' I hope that Chaucer, by placing his elf-queen 'in the days of King Artour,' did not mean to intimate that the two monarchies were equally fabulous and visionary. Master Wace has judged more candidly of the exploits of our British hero:—

'Ne tut mensonge, ne tut veir;
Ne tut folie, ne tut saveir.
Tant unt li conteor conté,
E li fableor tant fablé,
Pur les contes enbelecer,
Ke tut unt fait fable sembler.'

Le Brut. MS. Cotton., Vitell. A. 7.

Ver. 6441. 'Faerie:' 'Féerie,' Fr., from 'Fée,' the French name for those fantastical beings which in the Gothic languages are called 'alfs,' or 'elves.' The corresponding names to 'Fée,' in the other Romance dialects, are 'Fata,' Ital., and 'Hada,' Span.; so that it is probable that all three are derived from the Lat. 'Fatum,' which, in the barbarous ages, was corrupted into 'Fatus' and 'Fata.' (See Menage, in v. 'Fee;' Du Cange, in v. 'Fadus.')

Our system of faerie would have been much more complete, if all our ancient writers had taken the same laudable pains to inform us upon that head, that Gervase of Tilbery has done. ('Ot. Imp. Dec.' iii. c. 61, 62.) He mentions two species of dæmons in England, which I do not recollect to have met with in any other author. The first are those, 'quos Galli Neptunos,

Angli Portunos nominant.' Of the others he says—'Est in Angliâ quoddam dæmonum genus, quod suo idiomate Grant nominant, adinstar pulli equini anniculi, tibiis erectum, oculis scintillantibus,' &c.

This last seems to have been a dæmon *sui generis*, but the 'portunus' appears to have resembled the 'gobelin,' as described by Orderic, 'Vital.,' l. v. p. 556. Speaking of the miracles of St Taurinus at Evreux in Normandy, he says, 'Dæmon enim, quem de Dianæ phano expulit, adhuc in eâdem urbe degit, et in variis frequenter formis apparens neminem lædit. Hunc vulgus "Gobelinum" * appellat, et per merita Sancti Taurini ab humanâ læsione coercitum usque hodie affirmat.'

In the same manner Gervase says of the 'portuni':—'Id illis insitum est, ut obsequi possint et obesse non possint.' He adds indeed an exception:—'Verum unicum quasi modulum nocendi habent. Cum enim inter ambiguas noctis tenebras Angli solitarii quandoque equitant, Portunus nonnunquam invisus equitanti se copulat, et cum diutius comitatur euntem, tandem loris arreptis equum in lutum ad manum ducit, in quo dum infixus volutatur, Portunus exiens cachinnum facit, et sic hujuscemodi ludibrio humanam simplicitatem deridet.' This is exactly such a prank as our 'Hob,' or 'Hop, goblin' was used to play. (See the 'Midsummer Night's Dream,' Act 2, Scene 1; and Drayton's 'Nymphidia.') †

It should be observed, that the 'portuni,' according to Gervase, were of the true faery size, 'staturâ pusilli, dimidium pollicis non habentes.' But then, indeed, they were 'senili vultu, facie corrugatâ.' In 'Dec.,' i. c. 18, he describes another species of harmless dæmons, called 'folleti;' 'esprits follets,' Fr.; 'foletti,' Ital.

The 'incubus' mentioned below, (ver. 6462,) was a faery of not quite so harmless a nature. He succeeded to the ancient

* Gobelinum, v. Du Cange, Gloss. Gr. v. Κοβόλοι.

† I shall here correct a mistake of my own in the 'Discourse,' &c., note * p. cxxv. I have supposed that Shakspeare might have followed Drayton in his Faery system. I have since observed that 'Don Quixote,' which was not published till 1605, is cited in the 'Nymphidia,' whereas we have an edition of the 'Midsummer Night's Dream' in 1600. So that Drayton undoubtedly followed Shakspeare.

'fauni,' and like them was supposed to inflict that oppression, which goes under the name of the 'ephaltes,' or 'nightmare.' Pliny calls the ephialtes 'faunorum in quiete ludibria,' ('N. H.,' l. 25. x.) The 'incubus,' however, as Chaucer insinuates, exerted his powers for love as well as for hate. Gervas. Tilber. 'Dec.,' i. c. 17: 'Vidimus quosdam Dæmones tanto zelo mulieres amare quod ad inaudita prorumpunt ludibria, et cum ad concubitum earum accedunt mirâ mole eas opprimunt, nec ab aliis videntur.'

Ver. 6457. 'Undermeals:' The undermeal, *i.e.*, 'undern-mele,' was the dinner of our ancestors. (See the note on ver. 8136.)

Ver. 6466. 'Came riding fro river:' or, 'fro the river,' as it is in some MSS. It means 'from hawking at water-fowl.' Froissart, v. i. c. 140—'Le Comte de Flandres estoit tousjours en riviere—un jour advint qu'il alla voller en la riviere—et getta son fauconnier un faucon apres le heron, et le Comte aussi un.' So, in c. 210, he says, that Edward III. had with him in his army 'trente fauconniers à cheval, chargez d'oiseaux, et bien soixante couples de forts chiens et autant de levriers: dont il alloit, chacun jour, ou en chace ou en riviere, ainsi que il luy plaisoit.' Sir Thopas is described as following this knightly sport, ver. 13665:—

'He coude hunte at the wilde dere,
And ride on hauking for the rivere
With grey goshawk on honde.'

Ver. 6710. 'Full seld up riseth:' Dante, 'Purg.,' vii. 121:—

'Rade volte risurge per li rami
L'humana probitate: et questo vuole
Quei che la da, perche da se si chiami.'

Ver. 6741. 'For gentilles': A great deal of this reasoning is copied from Boethius, 'De Consol.,' l. iii. Pr. 6. See also 'R. R.,' 2184, et seq.:—

'For villanie maketh villeine,
And by his dedes a chorle is seine,' &c.

Ver. 6777. 'Poverty is hateful good:' In this commendation of poverty, our author seems plainly to have had in view the following passage of a fabulous conference between the Emperor

Adrian and Secundus the philosopher, reported by Vincent of Beauvais ('Spec. Histor.' l. x. c. 71):—'Quid est Paupertas? Odibile bonum; sanitatis mater; remotio curarum; sapientiæ repertrix; negotium sine damno; possessio absque calumnia; sine sollicitudine felicitas.' What Vincent has there published appears to have been extracted from a larger collection of 'Gnomæ' under the name of Secundus, which are still extant in Greek and Latin. (See Fabric. 'Bib. Gr.', l. vi. c. x.; and MS. Harl. 399.) The author of 'Pierce Ploughman' has quoted and paraphrased the same passage, fol. 75.

Ver. 6781. 'Elenge: ' 'Strange; ' probably from the old Fr. 'esloingné.' So in 'The Cuckow and Nightingale,' ver. 115:—

'Thy songes ben so elenge in good fay.'

And in 'P. P.,' fol. 3. b.:—

'Where the cat is a kiten, the court is full elenge.'

See also fol. 46. b.

Ver. 6797. 'For filth, and eld also, so: ' Though none of the MSS. that I have seen authorise the insertion of the second 'so,' it seems absolutely necessary.

Ver. 6858. 'Auctoritees: ' 'Auctoritas' was the usual word for what we call a 'text' of Scripture. MS. Harl. 106, 10: 'Expositio auctoritatis, Majus gaudium super uno peccatore.' Ibid. 21, 'Expositio auctoritatis, Stetit populus de longe,' &c.

Ver. 6931. 'The nale: ' The ale-house. 'P. P.,' fol. 32. b.:—

'And than satten some and songe at the nale.'

Skinner supposes it to be a corruption of 'inn-ale,' which is not impossible.

Ver. 6959. 'An old ribibe: ' He calls her below (ver. 7155) an 'old rebeck.' They were both names for the same musical instrument. See Menage, in v. 'Rebec.' 'Ribeba,' in the 'Decameron' (ix. 5), is rendered by Maçon, the old French translator, 'reebe' and 'guiterne.' Chaucer uses also the diminutive 'ribible,' (ver. 3331, 4395.) How this instrument came to be put for an old woman, I cannot guess, unless perhaps from its shrillness. An old writer, quoted by Du Cange, in v. 'Bandosa,' has the following lines in his description of a concert:—

'Quidam rebeccam arcuabant
Muliebrem vocem confingentes.'

Ver. 6990. 'Wariangles:' I have nothing to say either in refutation or support of Mr Speght's explanation of this word,—“A kind of birds full of noise, and very ravenous, preying upon others, which, when they have taken, they use to hang upon a thorne or pricke, and teare them in peeces, and devour them. And the common opinion is, that the thorne, whereupon they thus fasten them and eat them, is afterward poisonous. In Staffordshire and Shropshire the name is common,”—except that Cotgrave, in his 'Fr. Dict.,' explains 'arneat' to signify 'The ravenous bird called a shrike, nymmurder, wariangle.'

Ver. 7018. 'Too heavy or too hot:' We have nearly the same expression in Froissart, (v. i. c. 229,) 'Ne laissoient riens à prendre, s'il n'estoit trop chaud, trop froid, ou trop pesant.'

Ver. 7092. 'As to the Pythoness did Samuel:' So MS. A. The Editt. read—

‘As the Phitonesse did to Samuel;’

which is certainly wrong. (See 1 Sam. xxvii.) Our author uses 'Phitonesse' for 'Pythonesse' ('H. F.,' iii. 171). And so does Gower ('Conf. Amant.,' fol. 140):—

‘The Phitonesse in Samary.’

Ver. 7145. 'Liard:' A common appellative for a horse, from its gray colour, as 'bayard' was from 'bay.' (See before, ver. 4113.) 'P. P.,' fol. 92:—

‘He lyght downe of liarde and ladde him in his hand.’

Bp. Douglas, in his Virgil, usually puts 'liart' for 'albus,' 'incanus,' &c.

Ver. 7164. 'Thou olde very trate:' So MSS. C. 1, Ask. 1, 2, and Ed. Ca. 2. The later Editt. read 'viritrate' in one word. We may suppose 'trate' to be used for 'trot,' a common term for an old woman. Keyser ('Antiq. Sept.' p. 503) refers it to the same original with the German 'drud,' or 'drut;' 'Saga.'

Ver. 7269. 'And now hath Sathanas, saith he:' So MSS. C. 1, Ask. 1, 2. I have put these two lines in a parenthesis, as 'he' refers to the narrator, the Sompnour.

Ver. 7277. 'A twenty thousand:' I have added 'A' for the sake of the verse. Chaucer frequently prefixes it to nouns of number. See ver. 10697:—

And up they risen, wel a ten or twelve.'

Ver. 7299. 'To trentals:' 'Un trentel,' Fr., was a service of thirty masses, which were usually celebrated upon as many different days, for the dead. (Du Cange, in v. 'Trentale.')

Ver. 7327. 'Askaunce that he woulde for them pray:' The Glossary interprets 'ascaunce' to mean 'askew, aside, sideways; in a side view;' upon what authority I know not. It will be better to examine the other passages in which the same word occurs, before we determine the sense of it. See ver. 16306:—

'Ascaunce that craft is so light to lere.'

'Tro.,' i. 285:—

'Ascaunce, lo! is this not wisely spoken?'

Ibid., 292:—

'Ascaunce, what, may I not stonden here?'

'Lydg. Trag.,' fol. 136, b:—

'Ascaunce I am of maners most chaungeable.'

In the first and last instance, as well as in the text, 'ascaunce' seems to signify simply 'as if;' 'quasi.' In the two others it signifies a little more; 'as if to say.' This latter signification may be clearly established from the third line, which, in the Italian original, ('Filostrato di Boccaccio,' l. i.,) stands thus:—

'Quasi dicesse, e no ci si puo stare?'

So that 'ascaunce' is there equivalent to 'quasi dicesse' in Italian.

As to the etymology of this word, I must confess myself more at a loss. I observe, however, that one of a similar form in the Teutonic has a similiar signification. 'Als-kacks;' 'Quasi, quasi vero,' Kilian. Our 'as' is the same with 'als,' Teut. and Sax. It is only a further corruption of 'al so.' Perhaps, therefore, 'ascaunce' may have been originally 'als-kansse.' 'Kansse' in Teut. is 'chance,' Fr. and Eng.

I will just add, that this very rare phrase was also used, as I suspect, by the author of the 'Continuation of the Canterbury Tales,' first printed by Mr Urry (Prol., ver. 361):—

'And al ascaunce she loved him wel, she toke him by the swere.'

It is printed 'a stance.'

Ver. 7329. 'A Godde's kichel:' 'It was called a "Godde's

kichel," because godfathers and godmothers used commonly to give one of them to their godchildren, when they asked blessing.' (Sp.) And so we are to suppose a 'Godde's halfpenny,' in ver. 7331, was called for the same reason, &c. But this is all *gratis dictum*, I believe. The phrase is French, and the true meaning of it is explained by M. de la Monnoye in a note upon the 'Contes de B. D. Periers' (t. ii. p. 107):—'Belle serrure de Dieu : 'Expression du petit peuple, qui raporte pieusement tout à Dieu.—Rien n'est plus commun dans la bouche des bonnes vieilles, que ces especes d'Hebraïsmes : Il m'en coute un bel ecu de Dieu ; Il ne me reste que ce pauvre enfant de Dieu ; Donez moi une benite aumône de Dieu.'

Ver. 7442. 'Fifty year : ' See Du Cange, in v. 'Sempectæ.' Peculiar honours and immunities were granted by the Rule of St Benedict to those monks, 'qui quinquaginta annos in ordine exegerant, quos annum jubilæum exegisse vulgo dicimus.' It is probable that some similar regulation obtained in the other Orders.

Ver. 7488. 'Mendicants : ' In MS. A. it is 'mendinants,' both here and below, (ver. 7494,) which reading, though not agreeable to analogy, is perhaps the true one, as I find the word constantly so spelled in the Stat. 12 R. II., c. 7–10.

Ver. 7511. 'Jovinian : ' Against whom St Jerome wrote ; or, perhaps, the supposed emperor of that name in the 'Gesta Romanorum,' (c. lix.,) whose story was worked up into a Morality, under the title of 'L'orgueil et présomption de l'Empereur Jovinien—à 19 personages.' It was printed at Lyons, 1581, 8vo, 'sur une vieille copie.' (Du Verdier, in v. 'Jovinien.') The same story is told of a 'Robert, King of Sicily,' in an old English poem. (MS. Harl. 1701.) Mr Warton has given large extracts from an Oxford MS., as I suppose, of the same poem. ('Hist. of Eng. Po.,' p. 184.)

Ver. 7514. 'Of full great reverence : ' The Editt. have changed this to 'ful litel ; ' but the reading of the MSS. may stand, if it be understood ironically.

Ver. 7600. 'As saith Senec : ' This story is told by Seneca, ('De Irâ,' l. i. c. xvi.) of Cn. Piso. It is also told of an Emperor Eraclius, ('Gesta Romanorum,' cap. cxi.)

Ver. 7625. 'Irous Cambyses:' This story is also in Seneca, (l. iii. c. xiv.) It differs a little from one in Herodotus, (l. iii.)

Ver. 7657. 'Singeth *Placebo*;' The allusion is to an anthem in the Romish Church, from Psalm cxvi. 9, which in the Vulgate stands thus: 'Placebo Domino in regione vivorum.' Hence the complacent brother in the 'Merchant's Tale' is called 'Placebo.'

Ver. 7662. 'The river of Gisen:.' It is called 'Gyndes' in Seneca (lib. cit. c. xxi.); and in Herodotus, (l. i.)

Ver. 7666. 'That women:.' So the best MSS., agreeably to the authors just quoted. The Editt. have—

'That men might ride and wade,' &c.

Sir J. Mandeville tells the story of the Euphrates:—'Because that he had sworn, that he sholde putte the ryvere in suche poynt, that a womman myghte wel passe there, withouten castynge of of hire clothes.' (P. 49.)

Ver. 7710. 'The letter of our seal:.' There is a letter of this kind in Stevens ('Supp. to Dugd.,' vol. ii. App. p. 370):—'Fratres Prædicatores, Warwicc. admittunt Thomam Cannings et uxorem ejus Agnetem ad participationem omnium bonorum operum conventus ejusdem.' It is under seal of the Prior, 4 Non. Octob. An. Dom. 1347.

Ver. 7740. The remainder of this tale is omitted in MSS. B., G., and Bod. β., and instead of it they give us the following 'lame and impotent conclusion:.'—

'He ne had nozt ellis for his sermon
To part among his brethren when he cam home.
And thus is this tale idon.
For we were almost att the toun.'

I only mention this to shew what liberties some copyists have taken with our author.

Ver. 7879. 'Were new spoused:.' It has been observed in note upon ver. 812, that Chaucer frequently omits the governing pronoun before his verbs. The instances there cited were of personal pronouns. In this line, and some others, which I shall point out here, the relatives 'who' or 'which' are omitted in the same manner. (See ver. 7411, 13035, 16049.)

Ver. 7910. 'Lynyan,' or 'Linian:.' The person meant was an eminent lawyer, and made a great noise, as we say, in his time.

His name of late has been so little known, that I believe nobody has been angry with the Editt. for calling him 'Livian.' There is some account of him in Panzirolus ('De Cl. Leg. Interpret.' l. iii. c. xxv.):—'Joannes, a Lignano, agri Mediolanensis vico, oriundus, et ob id Lignanus dictus,' &c. One of his works, entitled, 'Tractatus de Bello,' is extant in MS. Reg., 13, B. ix. He compiled it at Bologna in the year 1360.

He was not, however, a mere lawyer. Chaucer speaks of him as excelling also 'in philosophy;' and so does his epitaph (Ap. Panzirol., l. c.):—

.
 'Gloria Lignani, titulo decoratus utroque,
 Legibus et sacro Canone dives erat,
 Alter Aristoteles, Hippocras erat et Ptolomæus.'

The only specimen of his philosophy that I have met with is in MS. Harl., 1006. It is an astrological work, entitled, 'Conclusiones Judicii composite per Domnum Johannem de Lyviano (l. Lyniano) super coronacione Domni Urbani Pape VI. A.D. 1378, xviii. April, &c., cum Diagrammate.' He also supported the election of Urban as a lawyer. (Panzirol., l. c. et 'Annal. Eccles.' a Raynaldo, tom. xvii.) He must, therefore, have lived at least to 1378, though in the printed epitaph he is said to have died in 1368, xvi. Febr.

Ver. 7927. 'To Emily-ward:' One of the regions of Italy was called Æmilia, from the Via Æmilia, which crossed it from Placentia to Rimini. Placentia stood upon the Po. ('Pitisc. Lex. Ant. Rom.,' in v. 'Via Æmilia.') Petrarch's description of this part of the course of the Po is a little different. He speaks of it as dividing the Æmilian and Flaminian regions from Venice—'Æmiliam atque Flaminiam Venetiamque discriminans.' But our author's 'Emily' is plainly taken from him.

As the following tale is almost wholly translated from Petrarch, (see the 'Discourse,' &c., § XX.,) it would be endless to cite particular passages from the original, especially as it is printed in all the editions of Petrarch's works. It is there entitled, 'De obedientiâ et fide uxoriâ Mythologia.'

Ver. 8136. 'The time of undern:' The Glossary explains this rightly to mean 'the third hour of the day, or nine of the

clock.' In ver. 8857, where this word is used again, the original has 'hora tertia.' In this place it has 'hora prandii.' From whence we may collect that in Chaucer's time the 'third hour,' or 'undern,' was the usual hour of dinner.

I have never met with any etymology of this word 'undern,' but the following passage might lead one to suspect that it had some reference to 'undernoon.' 'In the town-book belonging to the corporation of Stanford, 28 E. IV., it is ordeyned, that no person opyn ther sack, or set ther corn to sale afore hour of ten of the bell, or els the undernone bell be rongyn.' (Peck's 'Desid. Cur.,' vol. i. b. vi. p. 36.) In the Icelandic Dict. 'ond-verne' is rendered 'mane diei.'

Ver. 8258. 'Full of nouches:' The common reading is 'ouches;' but I have retained the reading of the best MSS., as it may possibly assist somebody to discover the meaning of the word. I observe, too, that it is so written in the inventory of the effects of Henry V. ('Rot. Parl.,' 2 H. VI. n. 31): 'Item 6 Broches et nouches d'or garniz de divers garnades pois 31^d d'or pris 35^s.'

Ver. 8466. 'Of Pavie:' When the text of this tale was printed, I had not sufficiently adverted to the reading of the best MSS. which is uniformly 'Pauik.' I have little doubt that it should be 'Panik' both here and below, (ver. 8640, 8814,) as in Petrarch the Marquis's sister is said to be married to the Count de Panico. In Boccaccio it is 'de Panago.'

Ver. 8614. 'His message:' His 'messenger.' (See below, ver. 8823.) 'Message' was commonly used for 'messenger' by the French Poets. (Du Cange, in v. 'Messagarius.')

Ver. 8915. 'As ye have do mo:' For 'me.' This is one of the most licentious corruptions of orthography that I remember to have observed in Chaucer. All that can be said in excuse of him is, that the old poets of other countries have not been more scrupulous. Quadrio has a long chapter (l. ii. dist. iv. cap. iv.) upon the licences taken by the Italian poets, and especially Dante, the most licentious, as he says, of them all, 'for the sake of rhyme.' As long a chapter might easily be filled with the irregularities which the old French poets committed for the same reason. It should seem that, while orthography was so variable,

as it was in all the living European languages before the invention of printing, the poets thought it generally advisable to sacrifice propriety of spelling to exactness of rhyming. Of the former offence there were but few judges; the latter was obvious to the eye of every reader.

Ver. 9064. 'Lest Chichevache:' This excellent reading is restored upon the authority of the best MSS., instead of the common one, 'Chechiface.' The allusion is to the subject of an old ballad, which is still preserved in MS. Harl. (2251, fol. 270, b.) It is a kind of pageant, in which two beasts are introduced, called 'Bycorne' and 'Chichevache.' The first is supposed to feed upon obedient husbands, and the other upon patient wives; and the humour of the piece consists in representing Bycorne as pampered with a superfluity of food, and Chichevache as half starved.

In Stowe's Catalogue of Lydgate's Works, at the end of Speght's Edit. of Chaucer, there is one entitled 'Of two monstrous beasts Bicornie and Chichefache.' It is not improbable that Lydgate translated the ballad now extant from some older French poem, to which Chaucer alludes. The name of Chichevache is French; 'Vacca parca.'

Ver. 9080. 'Aventail:' 'The forepart of the armour.' (Sk.) He deduces it from 'avant.' But 'ventaille' was the common name for that aperture in a close helmet through which the wearer was to breathe (Nicot, in v.); so that perhaps 'aventaille' meant originally an helmet with such an aperture; 'un heaume à ventaille.'

Ver. 9088. 'And wring and wail:' Besides the MSS. C. 1, Ask. 1, 2, and others, we have the authority of both Caxton's Editt. for concluding the Clerk's Tale in this manner. I say nothing of the two Editt. by Pynson, as they are mere copies of Caxton's second. But I must not conceal a circumstance which seems to contradict the supposition that the Merchant's Prologue followed immediately. In those same MSS. the following stanza is interposed:—

'This worthy Clerk whan ended was his tale,
Our Hoste saide and swore by cockes bones,
Me were lever than a barrel of ale

My wif at home had herd this legend ones ;
 This is a gentil tale for the nones,
 As to my purpos, wiste ye my wille.
 But thing that wol not be, let it be stille.'

Whatever may be thought of the genuineness of these lines, they can at best, in my opinion, be considered as a fragment of an unfinished prologue, which Chaucer might once have intended to place at the end of the Clerk's Tale. When he determined to connect that tale with the Merchant's in another manner, he may be supposed, notwithstanding, to have left this stanza for the present uncanceled in his MS. He has made use of the thought, and some of the lines, in the prologue which connects the Monk's Tale with 'Melibœus' (ver. 13895-13900).

The two additional stanzas, which were first printed in Ed. Urr. from MS. F., (H. 1, in Urry's List,) and which serve to introduce the Franklin's Tale next to the Clerk's, are evidently, I think, spurious. They are not found, as I recollect, in any MS. except that cited by Mr Urry and MS. B. If these two MSS. were of much greater age and authority than they really are, they would weigh but little in opposition to the number and character of those MSS. in which these stanzas are wanting, and in which the Merchant's Tale stands next to the Clerk's.

Another proof of the spuriousness of these stanzas is, that they are almost entirely made up of lines taken from the prologue, which in this Edition, upon the authority of the best MSS., is prefixed to the Squire's Tale. (See below, ver. 10301.)

Ver. 9172. 'Ne take no wife : ' What follows, to ver. 9180 inclusive, is taken from the 'Liber aureolus Theophrasti de nuptiis,' as quoted by Hieronymus, ('Contra Jovinianum,') and from thence by John of Salisbury, ('Polycrat.,' l. viii. c. xi.):—'Quod si propter dispensationem domus, et languoris solatia, et fugam solitudinis, ducuntur uxores, multo melius dispensat servus fidelis,' &c. 'Assidere autem ægrotanti magis possunt amici et vernulæ beneficiis obligati quam illa, quæ nobis imputet lachrymas suas,' &c.

Ver. 9180. 'Many a day : ' After this verse, in the common Editt., are these two :—

'And if thou take to thee a wife untrew
 Full oftentime it shall thee sore rew.'

In MSS. A., C., and B. *a.*, they stand thus:—

‘And if thou take a wif be wel ywar
Of on ^{peril}
thing which I declare ne dar.’

In MSS. C. 1, HA., D., thus:—

‘And if thou take a wif of heye lynage
She shal be hauteyn and of great costage.

In MS. B. δ . thus:—

‘And if thou take a wif in thin age olde
Ful lightly mayst thou be a cokewold.’

In MSS. Ask. 1, 2, E., H., B. θ ., N. C., and both Caxton’s Editt., they are entirely omitted, and so I believe they should be. If any one of these couplets should be allowed to be from the hand of Chaucer, it can only be considered as the opening of a new argument, which the author, for some reason or other, immediately abandoned, and consequently would have cancelled, if he had lived to publish his work.

Ver. 9236. ‘Lo how that Jacob:’ The same instances are quoted in ‘Melibœus.’

Ver. 9250. ‘As saith Senec:’ In Marg. C. 1: ‘Sicut nihil est superius benigna conjuge, ita nihil est crudelius infesta muliere.’ (Seneca.)

Ver. 9251. ‘As Caton bit:’ *i. e.*, biddeth. (See the note on ver. 187.) The line referred to is quoted in Marg. C. 1:—

‘Uxoris linguam, si frugi est, ferre memento.’

It is in l. iii. dist. 25.

Ver. 9259. ‘If thou lovest thyself:’ The allusion is to Ephes. v. 28: ‘He that loveth his wife, loveth himself.’ The MSS. read, ‘If thou lovest thyself, thou lovest thy wife;’ which, I think, is certainly wrong. I have printed, from conjecture only ‘love thou thy wife.’ But upon reconsidering the passage, I think it may be brought still nearer to the apostle’s doctrine by writing, ‘Thou lovest thyself, *if* thou lovest thy wife.’

Ver. 9298. ‘Wade’s boat:’ Upon this Mr Speght remarks, as follows: ‘Concerning Wade and his bote called Guingelot, as also his straunge exploits in the same, because the matter is long and fabulous, I passe it over.’ ‘Tantamne rem tam negliger?’ Mr Speght probably did not foresee that posterity would

be as much obliged to him for a little of this 'fabulous matter' concerning 'Wade and his bote,' as for the gravest of his annotations. The story of Wade is mentioned again by our author in his 'Troilus' (iii. 615):—

'He songe, she playede, he tolde a tale of Wade.'

It is there put proverbially for any romantic history; but the allusion in the present passage to 'Wade's boat' can hardly be explained, without a more particular knowledge of his adventures than we are now likely ever to attain.

Ver. 9348. 'Disputison:' Disputation. So ver. 11202, 15244. See Gower, ('Conf. Am.,' fol. 15, b):—

'In great desputeson they were;'

and fol. 150, b. 151, b.

Ver. 9409. 'A chidester:' So MS. A. (See the note on ver. 2019.)

Ver. 9410. 'A man is wood:' In MS. A., 'mannishewed;' in C. 1, 'mannish wood.'

Ver. 9594. 'Ne he Theodomas:' This person is mentioned again as a famous trumpeter in the 'H. of F.,' iii. 156; but upon what authority I really do not know. I should suspect that our author met with him, and the anecdote alluded to, in some Romantic History of Thebes.

'He' is prefixed to proper names emphatically, according to the Saxon usage. See before, ver. 9242, 'him Holofernes;' ver. 9247, 'him Mardochee;' and below, ver. 9608,

'Of her Philology and him Mercury.'

Ver. 9652. 'As that she bare it:' As this line is not only in all the best MSS. but also in Edit. Ca. 2, it seems very extraordinary that the later editions should have exchanged it for the following:—

'So fresh she was and thereto so licand.'

Ver. 9658. 'His service bedeth:' Proffereth. So this word is explained in another passage (ver. 16533):—

'Do, how this thief couldë his service bede!
Full sooth it is, that such proffer'd service
Stinketh, as witnessen these oldë wise.'

See also ver. 8236.

Ver. 9659. 'False of holy hue:' I have added 'of,' from conjecture. See below, ver. 12355, 'under hue of holiness.'

Ver. 9681. 'Vernage:' 'Vernaccia,' Ital. 'Credo sic dictum,' says Skinner, 'quasi Veronaccia, ab agro Veronensi in quo optimum ex hoc genere vinum crescit.' But the vernage, whatever may have been the reason of its name, was probably a wine of Crete, or of the neighbouring continent. Froiss., v. iv. c. 18: 'De l'isle de Candie il leur venoit tres bonnes malvoisies et grenaches (r. gernaches) dont ils estoient largement servis et confortez.' Our author, in another place, (ver. 13001,) joins together the wines of 'Malvesie' and 'Vernage.' Malvasia was a town upon the eastern coast of the Morea, near the site of the ancient Epidaurus Limera, within a small distance from Crete.

Ver. 9684. 'Dan Constantine:' 'Dan,' a corruption of 'Dominus,' was a title of honour usually given to monks, as Dom and Don still are in France and Spain. See below, ver. 13935:—

'Whether shall I call you my lord Dan John,
Or Dan Thomas, or ellës Dan Albon?'

Dan Constantine, according to Fabric., ('Bibl. Med. Æt,' t. i. p. 423, Ed. Pat. 4to,) wrote about the year 1080. His works, including the treatise mentioned in the text, were printed at Basil, 1536, fol.

Ver. 9690. 'And they have done:' This line has also been left out of the later Editt., though it is in all the best MSS. and in Edit. Ca. 2. To supply its place the following line—

'So hasted January it must be done'—

has been inserted after ver. 9691; and the four lines have been made to rhyme together by adding 'sone' at the end of ver. 9689:—

'Let voiden all this house in courteous wisë sone.'

Ver. 9714. 'Ne hurt himselfen:' In the Parson's Tale we have a contrary doctrine: 'God wot, a man may slay himself with his own knife, and make himself drunken of his own tun.'

Ver. 9761. 'In ten of Taure:' The greatest number of MSS. read 'two,' 'tuo,' 'too,' or 'to.' But the time given ('four days complete,' ver. 9767,) is not sufficient for the moon to pass from

the 2d degree of Taurus into Cancer. The mean daily motion of the moon being = $13^{\circ} 10' 35''$, her motion in four days is = $1^{\circ} 22' 42''$, or not quite 53 degrees; so that, supposing her to set out from the 2d of Taurus, she would not, in that time, be advanced beyond the 25th degree of Gemini. If she set out from the 10th degree of Taurus, as I have corrected the text, she might properly enough be said, in four days, to be 'gliden into' Cancer.

Ver. 9888. 'A dog for the bow:' A dog used in shooting. (See before, ver. 6951.)

Ver. 9967. 'So burningly:' Vulg. 'benignly.' MSS. Ask. 1, 2, read 'fervently;' which is probably a gloss for the true word, 'brenningly.' (See before, ver. 1566.) MS. A. reads 'benyngly.'

Ver. 9983. 'For as good is:' The reading in the text is from MS. Ask. 1. MS. A. reads thus:—

'For as good is al blind deceived be.'

I should not dislike—

'For as good is al blind deceived to be,
As be deceived, whan a man may see.'

Ver. 10000. 'What sleight is it:' These lines are a little different in MSS. C. 1., HA.:—

'What sleight is it, though it be long and hot,
That love n'il find it out in some mannere?'

Ver. 10104. 'Which that he ravished out of Ethna:' So MS. A. In some other MSS., 'Ethna,' by a manifest error of the copyist, has been changed into 'Proserpina.' The passage being thus made nonsense, other transcribers left out the line, and substituted this in its stead:—

'Each after other right as ony line.'

Ver. 10121. 'Among a thousand:' Ecclesiastes vii. 28. This argument is treated in much the same manner in 'Melibœus.'

Ver. 10158. 'The Roman gestes:' He means the collection of stories called 'Gesta Romanorum;' of which I once thought to say a few words here, in order to recommend it to a little more attention than it has hitherto met with from those who have

written upon the poetical inventions of the Middle Ages; but as many of the stories in that collection are taken from a treatise of Petrus Alphonsus, 'De Clericali disciplinâ,' an older and still more forgotten work, I shall reserve what I have to offer upon this subject till I come to the 'Tale of Melibœus,' where 'Piers Alphonse' is quoted.

Ver. 10227. 'Gan pullen:' After this verse, the Editt. (except Ca. 2, and Pyns. 1, 2,) have eight others of the lowest and most superfluous ribaldry that can well be conceived. It would be a mere loss of time to argue from the lines themselves, that they were not written by Chaucer, as we have this short and decisive reason for rejecting them, that they are not found in any one MS. of authority. They are not found in MSS. A., C. 1, Ask. 1, 2, HA., B., C., D., G., Bod. *a. β. γ. δ. ε. ζ.*, C. 2, T., N. Ch. In MSS. E., H., I., W., either the whole tale, or that part where they might be looked for, is wanting. The only tolerable MS. in which I have seen them is F., and there they have been added in the margin, by a later hand, perhaps not older than Caxton's first edition.

Ver. 10240. 'Out! help!' Two lines, which follow this in the common Editt., are omitted for the reasons stated in the note upon ver. 10227. And I shall take the same liberty, upon exactly the same grounds, with four more, which have been inserted in those Editt. after ver. 10250.

Ver. 10241. 'O stronge lady store:' As all the best MSS. support this reading, I have not departed from it, for fear 'store' should have some signification that I am not aware of. Some MSS. have 'stowre;' MS. G., 'houre;' Edit. Ca. 2, 'hore.' 'Hóra, meretrix,' Iceland.

Ver. 10261. 'Ye mase, ye masen:' The final 'n' has been added without authority, and unnecessarily. This line is very oddly written in MSS. Ask. 1, 2:—

'Ya may ya may ya, quod she.'

Ver. 10293. It has been said in the 'Discourse,' &c., § XXIII., that this new Prologue has been prefixed to the Squire's Tale upon the authority of the best MSS. They are as follows:—A., C. 1, Ask. 1, 2, HA., D., Bod. *a. γ. δ.* The concurrence of

the first five MSS. would alone have been more than sufficient to outweigh the authorities in favour of the other prologue. Edit. Ca. 2 (though it has not this prologue) agrees with these MSS. in placing the Squire's Tale *after* the Merchant's.

Ver. 10298. 'Weive:' This verb is generally used transitively; to 'wave,' to 'relinquish' a thing. But it has also a neuter signification; to 'depart;' as here. (See also vers. 4728, 9357.)

Ver. 10312. 'Since women connen utter:' MS. A. reads, 'oute;' but others have 'utter;' which I believe is right, though I confess that I do not clearly understand the passage. The phrase has occurred before (ver. 6103):—

'With danger uttren we all our chaffare.'

Ver. 10344. 'Of which the eldest son:' I have added 'son,' for the sake of the metre.

Ver. 10364. 'And in his mansion:' 'His' refers to Mars, and not to the Sun. 'Aries est l'exaltation du Soleil ou xix. degre. et si est Aries maison de Mars.' ('Calend. des Berg.,' Sign. I. ult.) Leo was the mansion of the Sun. (Ibid., Sig. K. 1.) Aries is there also said to be 'signe chault et sec.'

Ver. 10381. 'Strange sewes:' A sewer was an officer so called from his placing the dishes upon the table. 'Asseour,' Fr., from 'asseoir,' to place. In the establishment of the king's household there are still four Gentlemen Sewers. 'Sewes' here seem to signify 'dishes,' from the same original; as 'assiette,' in Fr., still signifies a 'little dish,' or 'plate.' See Gower, 'Conf. Am.,' fol. 115, b:—

'The fleshe, whan it was so to-hewe,
She taketh, and maketh therof a sewe.'

Ver. 10382. 'Heronsewes:' 'Heronceaux,' Fr., according to the Glossary. At the Intronisation of Archbp. Nevil, 6 Edward IV., there were 'Heronshawes iiij C.' (Lel. 'Collect.,' vol. vi. 2.) At another feast, in 1530, we read of '16 Hearonsews, every one 12d.' (Peck's 'D. C.,' vol. ii. 12.)

Ver. 10509. 'A gentle Poileis courser:' A horse of Apulia, which in old Fr. was usually called 'Poille.' The horses of that country were much esteemed. (MS. Bod., James VI., 142.) Richard, Archbp. of Armagh, in the fourteenth century, says in

praise of our St Thomas: 'Quod nec mulus Hispaniæ, nec dextrarius Apuliæ, nec repedo Æthiopiæ, nec elephante Asiæ, nec camelus Syriæ hoc asino nostro Angliæ aptior sive audentior invenitur ad prælia.' He had before informed his audience, that 'Thomas, Anglice, idem est quod Thom. Asinus.' There is a patent in Rymer, 2 E. II., 'De dextrariis in Lumbardiâ emendis.'

Ver. 10523. 'The Greek's horse Sinon:.' This is rather an awkward expression for 'the horse of Sinon the Greek;.' or, as we might say, 'Sinon the Greek's horse.'

Ver. 10546. 'Alhazen and Vitellon:.' 'Alhazeni et Vitellonis Opticæ' are extant, printed at Basil, 1572. The first is supposed by his editor to have lived about A.D. 1100, and the second to A.D. 1270.

Ver. 10561. 'Canacees:.' This word should perhaps have had an accent on the first 'e'—Canacées—to shew that it is to be pronounced as of four syllables. So also below (ver. 10945)—

'And swouneth eft in Canacées barme.'

Ver. 10570. 'Yknowen it so ferne:.' 'Known it so before.' I take 'ferne' to be a corruption of 'forne' ('foran,' Sax.). So in 'Tro.,' v. 1176, 'ferne yere' seems to signify 'former years.' In 'P. P.' fol. lxxx. b., 'ferne ago' is used as 'long ago.'

Ver. 10583. 'Chamber of parements:.' 'Chambre de parement' is translated, by Cotgrave, the presence-chamber; and 'Lit de parement,' a bed of state. 'Parements' originally signified all sorts of ornamental furniture, or clothes, from 'parer,' Fr., 'to adorn.' See ver. 2503, and 'Leg. of G. W., Dido,' ver. 181:—

'To dauncing chambres, ful of parementes,
Of riche beddes and of pavementes,
This Eneas is ledde after the mete.'

The Italians have the same expression ('Ist. d. Conc. Trident.,' l. iii):—'Il Pontefice—ritornato alla camera de' paramenti co' Cardinali.'

Ver. 10587. 'In the Fish:.' See the note on ver. 6284.

Ver. 10660. 'Till that well nigh:.' 'That' has been added for the sake of the metre. We might read with some MSS.—

'Till well nigh the day began for to spring.'

Ver. 10663. 'That muchel drink and labour : ' So MSS. C. 1, HA. In MS. A. it is 'That mirthe and labour ; ' in Ask. 1, 2, 'That after moche labour ; ' in several other MSS. and Editt. Ca. 1, 2, 'That moche mete and labour.' We must search further, I apprehend, for the true reading.

Ver. 10666. 'Blood in domination : ' 'V. Lib. Galeno adser. de natura,' &c., Ed. Charter. T. V., p. 327. 'Sanguis dominatur horis septem ab hora noctis nona ad horam diei tertiam.'

Ver. 10742. 'A falcon peregrine : ' This species of falcon is thus described in the 'Tresor de Brunet Latin,' P. 1. Ch. Des Faucons (MS. Reg. 19, C. X.) : 'La seconde lignie est faucons, que hom apele pelerins, par ce que nus ne trove son ni. ains est pris autresi come en pelerinage. et est mult legiers a norrir, et mult cortois, et vaillans, et de bone maniere.' Chaucer adds, that this falcon was of 'fremde,' or 'fremed, lond ; ' from a 'foreign country.'

Ver. 10749. 'Leden : ' 'Language,' Sax., a corruption of 'Latin.' Dante uses 'Latino' in the same sense (Canz. 1):—

'E cantine gli augelli
Ciascuno in suo latino.'

Ver. 10840. 'Crowned malice : ' The reader of taste will not be displeased, I trust, at my having received this reading upon the authority of MS. A. only. The common reading is 'cruel.'

Ver. 10921. 'Thilke text : ' Boethius, l. iii. met. 2 :—

'Repetunt proprios quæque recursus,
Redituque suo singula gaudent ; '

which our author has thus translated : 'All thynges seken ayen to hir propre course, and all thynges rejoysen in hir retourninge agayne to hir nature.' The comparison of the bird is taken from the same place.

Ver. 10958. 'Velouettes blue : ' 'Velvets,' from the Fr. 'Velou,' 'Velouette.' See Du Cange, in v. 'Villosa, Velluctum.' See Saintré, t. iii. p. 664.

I will just add, that as 'blue' was the colour of 'truth,' (see CL. 248,) so 'green' belonged to 'inconstancy.' Hence in a 'Ballade upon an inconstant lady,' (among Stowe's Additions to Chaucer's Works, p. 551, Ed. Urry,) the burden is—

'Instede of blew thus may ye were al grene.'

Ver. 10962. 'These tidifes : ' The 'tidife' is mentioned as an inconstant bird in the 'Leg. of G. W.,' ver. 154 :—

'As doth the tidif for newefangelnesse.'

Skinner supposes it to be the 'titmouse;' but he produces no authority for his supposition; nor have I any to oppose to it.

Ver. 10963, 10964, are transposed from the order in which they stand in all the Editt. and MSS. that I have seen. Some of the best MSS. however read 'And pies,' which rather countenances the transposition. My only excuse for such a liberty must be, that I cannot make any good sense of them in the common order.

Ver. 10977, 10978, are also transposed; but upon the authority of MSS. A., C. 1, and, I believe, some others; though, being satisfied of the certainty of the emendation, I have omitted to take a note of their concurrence. Ed. Ca. 2 agrees with those MSS. According to the common arrangement, old Cambuscan is to 'win Theodora to his wife,' and we are not told what is to be the object of Algarsif's adventures.

Ver. 10981. 'Of Camballo:' MS. A. reads 'Caballo.' But that is not my only reason for suspecting a mistake in this name. It seems clear from the context, that the person here intended is not 'a brother,' but 'a lover,' of Canace—

'Who fought in listes with the brethren two
For Canace, or that he might hire winne.'

'The brethren two' are, obviously, the two brethren of Canace, who have been mentioned above, Algarsif and Camballo. In MSS. Ask. 1, 2, it is, 'hir brethren two;' which would put the matter out of all doubt. Camballo could not fight with himself.

Again, if this Camballo be supposed to be the brother of Canace, and to fight in defence of her with some two brethren, who might be suitors to her, according to Spenser's fiction, he could not properly be said to 'winne' his sister, when he only prevented others from winning her.

The outline therefore of the unfinished part of this tale, according to my idea, is nearly this; the conclusion of the story of the 'Faucon,'

'By mediation of Camballus,'

with the help of the Ring; the conquests of Cambuscan; the winning of Theodora by Algarsif, with the assistance of the Horse of Brass; and the marriage of Canace to some knight, who was first obliged to fight for her with her two brethren—a method of courtship very consonant to the spirit of ancient chivalry.

Ver. 10984. 'And there I left:'. After this verse, in MS. C. 1, and others, is the following note: 'Here endeth the Squieres tale as meche as Chaucer made.' The two lines, which in the Editt. and some MSS. are made to begin a third part, are wanting in all the best MSS.:—

'Apollo whirleth up his chare so hie
Til that the god Mercurius house the slie.'

They certainly have not the least appearance of belonging to this place. I should guess that they were originally scribbled by some vacant reader in the blank space, which is commonly left at the end of this tale, and afterwards transcribed, as Chaucer's, by some copyist of more diligence than sagacity.

Ver. 10985. 'In faith, Squier:'. The authorities for giving this prologue to the Franklin, and for placing his tale next to the Squire's, are MSS. A., Ask. 1, 2, HA., Bod. a. γ. In MS. C. 1, there is a blank of near two pages at the end of the Squire's Tale, but the Franklin's Tale follows, beginning at ver. 11066. This arrangement is also supported by Ed. Ca. 2. For the rest, see the 'Discourse,' &c., § XXV.

Ver. 11021. 'These olde gentle Bretons:'. Of the collection of 'British Lays,' by Marie, something has been said in the 'Discourse,' &c., p. cxxvii., note. I will here only quote a few passages from that collection, to shew how exactly Chaucer and she agree in their manner of speaking of the Armorican bards. The Lay of 'Elidus' concludes thus (MS. Harl., 978, fol. 181):—

'De l'aventure de ces treis
Li auntien Bretun curteis
Firent li lai pur remembrer,
Qe hum nel deust pas oblier.'

The Lay of 'Guigemar' thus (fol. 146):—

'De cest cunte, ke oi avez,
Fu Guigemar le lai trovez,

Q'hum fait en harpe e en rote,
Dont est a oir la note.'

The Lay of 'Chevrefoil' begins (fol. 171) :—

'Asez me plect, e bien le voil,
Du lai qe hum nune chevrefoil
Q'la verite vus encunt,
Pur quoi il fu fet e dunt.
Plusurs le me unt cunte e dit,
E jeo l'ai trove en escrit,
De Tristram e de la reine,
De lur amur qui tant fu fine,
Dunt il eurent meinte dolor,
Puis mururent en un jur.'

In one particular Chaucer goes further, as I remember, than Marie, when he says, that these Lays were

'Rimeyed in hir firste Breton tonge,'

if 'rimeyed' be understood to mean 'written in rhyme.' But it may very well signify only 'versified.' Indeed, the Editor of the 'Dictionaire de la Langue Bretonne,' by Dom Pelletier, seems to doubt whether the Armorican language be capable of any sort of poetical harmony. 'Nous ne voyons pas que nos Bretons Armoricains ayent cultivée la poësie; et la langue telle qu'ils la parlent, ne paroît pas pouvoir se plier à la mesure, à la douceur et à la harmonie des vers.' (Pref., p. ix.) A strange doubt in him, who might have found in the Dictionary which he has published, quotations from two Armorican poems, viz., 'Les Propheties de Gwinglaff,' and 'La Destruction de Jerusalem,' both in rhyme. (See 'Arabat. Bagat.')

And he himself speaks in the same preface (p. viii.) of 'la vie de S. Gwenolé, premier Abbé de Landevenec, écrite en vers.' The oldest MS., however, now known in the language, according to his account, is that containing 'Les Propheties de Gwinglaff,' written in 1450.

Ver. 11113. 'Not far from Penmark:' The best MSS. have blundered in this name. They write it 'Pedmark.' But MSS. Bod. a., e., and Ed. Ca. 2, have it right—'Penmark.' The later Editt. have changed it ridiculously enough into 'Denmark.'

Penmark is placed in the maps upon the western coast of Bretagne, between Brest and Port L'Orient. Walsingham men-

tions a descent of the English in 1403, 'apud Penarch,' (r. Penmarch,) p. 369. (See Lobineau, 'H. de Bret.,' t. i. p. 503.) In the same history, 'de Penmarc' occurs very frequently as a family-name. The etymology of the word, from 'Pen' (caput, mons) and 'Mark' (limes, regio), is evidently British.

Ver. 11120. 'Cairrud : ' This word is also of British original, signifying 'the Red city ; ' as 'Cair guent,' in this island, signified 'the white city.' Arviragus is a known British name from the time of Juvenal.

Ver. 11127. 'Dorigen : ' 'Droguen,' or 'Dorguen,' was the name of the wife of Alain I. (Lobineau, t. i. p. 70 ; see also the index to t. ii.)

Ver. 11250. 'Aurelius : ' This name, though of Roman original, was common, we may presume, among the Britons. One of the princes mentioned by Gildas was called Aurelius Conanus. Another British king is named Aurelius Ambrosius by Geoffrey of Monmouth. It may be remarked of this last author, that although he has not paid the least regard to truth in his narration of facts, he has been very attentive to probability in his names both of persons and places.

Ver. 11262. 'As doth a furie in hell : ' It is 'a fire,' in MSS. C. 1, Ask. 1, 2, HA., which, perhaps, ought to have been followed : though I cannot say that I well understand either of the readings. 'Fury' and 'fuyr' have been confounded before (ver. 2686).

Ver. 11317. 'Is there none other grace : ' I have inserted these two lines in this place upon the authority of MS. A., supported by MSS. E., Bod. θ. They have usually been placed after ver. 11310.

Ver. 11422. 'Pamphilus for Galathee : ' Mr Urry, misled by his classical learning, has altered this most licentiously—

'Than Polyphemus did for Galathee.'

But the allusion is plainly to the first lines of a Latin poem, which was very popular in the time of Chaucer, in which one Pamphilus gives a history of his amour with Galatea.

The poem begins thus (MS. Cotton. Titus A. xx.) :—

' *Liber Pamphili.*

Vulneror et clausum porto sub pectore telum,
Crescit et assidue plaga dolorque mihi.

Et ferientis adhuc non audeo dicere nomen,
Nec sinit aspectus plaga videre suos.'

This poem, by the name of 'Pamphilus,' is quoted in our author's 'Melibœus.' It is extant in MS. in many libraries, and it has also been printed more than once. (Leyser., 'Hist. Poet. Medii Ævi,' p. 2071 (1171); Catal. Gaignat., n. 2233, 2234.)

Ver. 11453. 'Tregetoures:' The profession of a 'joculator,' or 'juggler,' was anciently very comprehensive, as appears from this passage of the 'Breviari d' Amors.' (See the 'Discourse,' &c., page cxxix., note):—

'Altressi peccan li joglar,
Que ssabo cantar e balar,
E ssabo tocar estrumens,
O ssabon encantar las gens,
O ffar autra joglayria.'

In the time of Chaucer, the persons who exercised the first-mentioned branches of the art were called, generally, 'minstrels;' and the name of 'jogelour' was, in a manner, appropriated to those who, by sleight of hand and machines, produced such illusions of the senses as are usually supposed to be effected by enchantment. (See above, ver. 7049.) This species of 'jogelour' is here called a 'tregetour.' They are joined together in company with magicians. ('H. of F.,' iii. 169.)

'Ther saw I playing jogelours,
Magiciens and tragetours,
And phitonesses, charmeresses—
And clerkes eke which conne wel
All this magike naturell.'—

See also the following ver. 187–191.

If we compare the feats of the 'tregetours,' as described in this passage, with those which are afterwards performed by the Clerk's 'magike,' for the entertainment of his guests, (ver. 11501–11519,) we shall find them very similar; and they may both be illustrated by the following account which Sir John Mandeville has given of the exhibitions before the 'Grete Chan.:' 'And than comen jogulours and enchantoures, that don many marvaylles: for they maken to come in the ayr the Sonne and the Mone, be seminge, to every mannes sight. And after they

maken the nyght so derk, that no man may see no thing. And afre they maken the day to come ayen fair and plesant with bright Sonne to every mannes sight. And than they bringen in daunces of the fairest damyselles of the world and richest arrayed. And afre they maken to comen in other damyselles, bringinge coupes of gold, fulle of mylk of dyverse bestes, and yeven drynke to lordes and to ladyes. And than they make knyghtes to jousten in armes fulle lustyly; and they rennen togidre a gret random; and they frusschen togidre fulle fiercely; and they breken here speres so rudely, that the tronchouns flen in sprotes and peces alle aboute the halle. And than they make to come in huntyng for the hert and for the boor, with houndes renning with open mouthe. And many other thinges they don be craft of hir enchauntementes, that it is marveyle for to see. And suche playes of desport they make, til the taking up of the boordes.' ('Mand. Trav.,' pp. 285, 286.) See also p. 261: 'And wher it be by craft or by nygromancye, I wot nere.'

The Glossary derives 'tregetour' from the Barb. Lat., 'tricator;' but the derivatives of that family are 'tricheur,' 'tricherie,' 'trick,' &c. Nor can I find the word 'tregetour' in any language but our own. It seems clearly to be formed from 'treget,' which is frequently used by Chaucer for 'deceit,' 'imposture' ('R. R.,' 6267, 6312, 6825); and so is 'tregetry' (ibid., 6374, 6382). From whence 'treget' itself may have been derived is more difficult to say; but I observe that 'trebuchet,' the French name for a military engine, is called by Chaucer, 'trepeget' ('R. R.,' 6279), and by Knighton (2672), 'trepget;' and that this same word, 'trebuchet,' in French, signified also a machine 'for catching birds.' Du Cange, in v. 'Trepget:' 'Hinc appellatio mansit apud nos instrumentis, aut machinulis, suspensis et lapsilibus, ad captandas aviculas. Has enim etiamnum trebuchets appellamus.' Muratori, in his 'Antiq. Med. Æ.,' Diss. xxvi. p. 473, informs us that 'trabocchello,' or 'trabocchetto,' in Italian, (which he explains to be the same as 'trebuchet' in French,) signified also another instrument of fraud, which he describes thus: 'Sæculis Italiæ turbatissimis—in usu fuere teterima insidiarum loca, id est, in cubiculis pavementum perforatum, ac lineâ tabulâ (Ribalta appellabant) ita caute coopertum, ut qui,

improvidē alteram tabulæ partem pedibus premeret, cedente ipsa in ima rueret.' This was clearly a species of trap-door. The reader will judge whether the 'tregetour' may not possibly have been so called from his frequent use of these insidious machines in his operations.

That a great deal of machinery was requisite to produce the 'apparences,' or illusions, enumerated by Chaucer in this passage, is very certain: but not long after the art of a 'tregetour' seems to have been reduced to that of a modern ' juggler,' mere sleight of hand. In Lydgate's translation of 'The Dance of Macabre' (MS. Harl., 116), he has introduced a 'tregitour' speaking thus:—

'What may availe mankynde [f. magike] naturala,
Or any crafte shewed by apparence,
Or course of sterres above celestiale,
Or of heven all the influence,
Ayenst deth to stand at defence?
Lygarde de mayne now helpith me right nought.
Farewell my craft and all such sapience,
For deth hath more maistries than I have wrought.'

He has also the following speech of Death to a famous 'tregitour':—

'Maister John Rykell, sometime tregitour
Of noble Henri kinge of Englelond,
And of France the mighty conquerour,
For all the sleighes and turnyng of thyne honde,
Thou must come nere this dance to understonde:
Nought may avail all thy conclusions.
For deth shortly, nother on see nor longe,
Is not dysceyved by noon illusions.'

Ver. 11567. 'And nowel crieth:.' 'Noël,' in French, is derived from 'natalis,' and signified originally a cry of joy at Christmas, 'le jour natal de notre Seigneur.' (Menage in v. 'Nouvel.') It was afterwards the usual cry of the people upon all occasions of joy and festivity. 'Hist. de Charles VII.,' par Chartier, p. 3, at the proclamation of Henry VI., 'fut crié sur la fosse de son pere à haute voix, Vive le Roy Henry, Roy de France et d'Angleterre; et avec cela fut crié "Noël," des assistans, confortans lesdits Anglois.'

Ver. 11585. 'His tables Toletanes:.' The Astronomical Tables,

composed by order of Alphonso X., king of Castille, about the middle of the thirteenth century, were called sometimes 'Tabulæ Toletanæ,' from their being adapted to the city of Toledo. There is a very elegant copy of them in MS. Harl., 3647. I am not sufficiently skilled in the ancient astronomy to add anything to the explanation of the following technical terms, drawn chiefly from those tables, which has been given in the Addit. to Gloss., Urr., v. 'Expans yeres,' p. 81.

Ver. 11679. 'Thise stories bere witnesse:' They are all taken from Hieronymus 'Contra Jovinianum,' l. i. c. 39.

Ver. 11766. 'To alle wives:' After this verse, the two following are found in several MSS.:—

'The same thing I say of Bilia,
Of Rhodogone and of Valeria;'

but as they are wanting in MSS. A. C. 1, Ask. 1, 2, HA., I was not unwilling to leave them out.

Ver. 11802. 'She n'olde:' After this verse Ed. Ca. 2 has the six following:—

'Peraventure an hepe of you I wis
Will holden him a lewed man in this,
That he woll put his wife in jeopardie.
Herkneth the tale, er ye upon him crie.
She may have better fortune than you semeth;
And whan that ye han herde the tale demeth.'

These lines are more in the style and manner of Chaucer than interpolations generally are; but as I do not remember to have found them in any MS., I could not receive them into the text. I think, too, that if they were written by him, he would probably, upon more mature consideration, have suppressed them, as unnecessarily anticipating the catastrophe of the tale.

Ver. 11807. 'As she was boun:' 'Ready.' This old word is restored from MSS. A., Ask. 1, 2. (See 'P. L.,' p. 256, 291.)

Ver. 11926. 'Which was the most free:' The same question is stated in the conclusion of Boccaccio's Tale ('Philoc.,' l. v.):—
'Dubitasi ora qual di costoro fusse maggior liberalità,' &c. The queen determines in favour of the husband.

Ver. 11929. 'Yea, let that passen:' I have said all that I have to say in favour of this Prologue to the Doctor's Tale, in the

'Discourse,' &c., § XXVIII. It is only found in MS. A. In MSS. C. 1, HA., the following note is at the end of the Franklin's Tale: 'Here endeth the Fr. T. and biginneth the Phisiciens tale without a Prologe.'

Ver. 11993. 'For wine and youthe:' The context, I think, requires that we should read—

'For wine and slouthē do Venus increase.'

He is giving the reason why she avoided 'slogardie,' and did not permit Bacchus to have 'maistrie of hire mouth;' because 'wine and slouthē encrease the amorous inclinations, as oil and grese do fire.' I can make no sense of 'youthe,' or 'thoughte,' as some MSS. read.

Ver. 12051. 'The Doctor:' Over against this line, in the margin of MS. C. 1, is written 'Augustinus;' which means, I suppose, that this description of Envy is taken from S. Austin. But I doubt whether Chaucer meant to quote that saint by the title of the Doctor. It rather seems to be an idle parenthesis like that ver. 7269.

Ver. 12074. 'A churl:' So the best MSS., and Ed. Ca. 2. The common Editt. have 'client.' In the 'Rom. de la R.,' where this story is told, (ver. 5815-5894,) Claudius is called 'Sergent of Appius:' and accordingly Chaucer, a little lower, (ver. 12204,) calls him 'servant—unto—Appius.'

In the 'Discourse,' &c., § XXIX., I forgot to mention the 'Rom. de la Rose' as one of the sources of this tale; though, upon examination, I find that our author has drawn more from thence than from either Gower or Livy.

Ver. 12159. 'For love:' 'Rom. de la R.,' 5871:—

'Car par amour et sans haïne
A sa belle fille Virgine
Tantost a la teste coupée,
Et puis au Juge présentée
Devant tous en plain Consistoire,
Et le Juge, selon l'hystoire,
Le commanda tantost à prendre.'

(See below, v. 12190-12193.) The speeches of Virginus and his daughter are of Chaucer's own invention.

Ver. 12190. See 'P. L.,' 18.

Ver. 12233. 'Of bothe giftes:' This line is restored from MSS. C. 1, HA. It had been supplied in the common copies by the following:—

'But hereof wol I not proceed as now.'

Ver. 12236. 'A piteous tale:' This is the reading of two good MSS., A. and HA.; but I believe it to be a gloss. The other copies read 'erneful,' which is near the truth. It should be 'ermeful.' 'Earme,' Sax., signifies 'miser.' Hence, 'earmelice,' 'miserè' ('Chr. Sax.,' 65); 'earmthe,' 'miseria,' (Ibid., 141.) And a little lower, (ver. 12246,) 'to erme' is used for 'to grieve,' as the Sax. 'earmian' is, ('Chr. Sax.,' 188, 14.)

Ver. 12239. 'Thy jordanes:' This word is in Walsingham (p. 288), 'duæ ollæ, quas Jordanes vocamus, ad ejus collum colligantur.' This is part of the punishment of a pretended 'phisicus et astrologus,' who had deceived the people by a false prediction. Hollinshed calls them 'two jorden pots' (p. 440).

Ver. 12240. 'Thine Hippocras:' 'Ypocras,' or 'Hippocras,' and 'Galianes,' should both have been printed, as proper names, with great initial letters. (See the note on ver. 433.)

Ver. 12245. 'Said I not well?' All the best MSS. agree in giving this phrase to the Host in this place. It must remind us of the similar phrase, 'Said I well?' which occurs so frequently in the mouth of Shakspeare's Host of the Garter; and may be sufficient, with the other circumstances of general resemblance, to make us believe that Shakspeare, when he drew that character, had not forgotten his Chaucer.

Ver. 12279. 'To saffron:' So MS. A., and Ed. Ca. 2. I have preferred it to the common reading 'savor,' as more expressive, and less likely to have been a gloss. Saffron was used to give colour as well as flavour.

The next lines are thus read in MSS. C. 1, Ask. 1, 2, HA.:—

'In every village and in every toun,
This is my teme, and shal and ever was;
Radix malorum est cupiditas.
Than shew I forth,' &c.

And perhaps I ought to have followed them.

Ver. 12297. 'Fasting ydrinken:' The prepositive particle 'y' has been added for the sake of the metre.

Ver. 12340. 'Go a blake beried:' So all the MSS., I think, except Ask. 2, which reads, 'on blake be ryed.' Skinner explains 'blakeberied' to mean 'in nigras et inauspicatas domos missus.' I really cannot guess what it means.

Ver. 12341. 'For certes:' See 'R. R.,' ver. 5763:—

'For oft gode predicacioun
Cometh of evil entencioun.'

Ver. 12409. 'Them thought the Jewes:' The same thought is repeated in the Parson's Tale.

Ver. 12411. 'Tombesteres:' Women-dancers, from the Sax. 'tumban,' to dance. He uses the word again in the 'Test. of L.,' b. 2. The Editt. read 'tumblesteres;' which is a later word, formed, like our tumbler, from 'tumbelan,' the frequentative of 'tumban.'

With respect to the termination in 'stere,' see the note on ver. 2019; and in the next line 'fruitesteres' are to be understood to be female sellers of fruit.

Ver. 12417. 'The holy writ:' In marg. C. 1, 'Nolite inebriari vino, in quo est luxuria.'

Ver. 12426. 'Seneca:' Perhaps he refers to Epist. lxxxiii.: 'Extende in plures dies illum ebrii habitum: nunquid de furore dubitabis? nunc quoque non est minor sed brevior.'

Ver. 12442. 'For while that Adam:' At this line, the margin of MS. C. 1, quotes Hieronym. ('C. Jovinian.'): 'Quam diu jejnavit Adam in Paradiso fuit. Comedit et ejectus est. Statim duxit uxorem.'

Ver. 12456. 'Meat unto womb:' In marg. C. 1., 'Esca ventri,' &c.

Ver. 12463. 'The Apostle saith:' Philippians iii. 18.

Ver. 12468. 'Stinking is thy cod:' So MS. C. Or we may read with MS. B. δ, 'O foule stinking cod.'

Ver. 12471. 'To find:' To supply. So ver. 14835:—

'She found herself and eke her daughters two.'

See also 'P. P.,' fol. lxxx.:—

'For a frend, that findeth him, faileth him never at nede.'

Ver. 12473. V. D'Artigny, vol. vi. p. 399.

Ver. 12497. 'The white wine of Lepe:' According to the geo-

graphers, Lepe was not far from Cadiz. This wine, of whatever sort it may have been, was probably much stronger than the Gascon wines, usually drunk in England. La Rochelle and Bourdeaux, (ver. 12505,) the two chief ports of Gascony, were both, in Chaucer's time, part of the English dominions.

Spanish wines might also be more alluring upon account of their greater rarity. Among the Orders of the Royal Household, in 1604, is the following (MS. Harl., 293, fol. 162): 'And whereas, in tymes past, Spanish wines, called Sacke, were little or noe whit used in our courte, and that in later years, though not of ordinary allowance, it was thought convenient, that noble-men, &c., might have a boule or glass, &c.; we understanding that it is now used as common drinke, &c., reduce the allowance to XII gallons a day for the court,' &c.

Ver. 12520. 'Readeth the Bible:' Proverbs xxxi. 4.

Ver. 12537. 'Stilbon:' John of Salisbury, from whom our author probably took this story and the following, calls him 'Chilon' ('Polycrat,' l. 1, c. 5): 'Chilon Lacedæmonius, iungendæ societatis causâ missus Corinthum, duces et seniores populi ludentes invenit in aleâ. Infecto itaque negotio reversus est,' &c. Accordingly, in ver. 12539, MS. C. 1 reads, very rightly, 'Lacedomye' instead of 'Calidone,' the common reading. Our author has used before 'Lacedomie' for 'Lacedæmon,' (ver. 11692.)

Ver. 12542. 'Yplaying atte hazard:' I have added the prepositive 'y' for the sake of the metre. 'Atte' is a dissyllable. It was originally 'atten,' and is so used by 'R. G.' (pp. 379, 431). It has been frequently corrupted into 'at the;' but in Chaucer it may, and I think should, almost everywhere be restored. See ver. 125, 3934, 4303, where some MSS. have preserved the true readings—'atte Bowe;' 'atte full.'

Ver. 12585. 'His nails:' *i. e.*, with which He was nailed to the Cross. Sir J. Mandeville (c. vii.): 'And thereby in the walle is the place where the 4 Nayles of our Lord weren hidd; for he had 2 in his hondes and 2 in his feet: and of one of theise the Emperour of Costantynoble made a brydille to his hors, to bere him in bataylle; and thorgh vertue thereof he overcame his enemies,' &c. He had said before (c. ii.), that 'on of the nayles

that Crist was naylled with on the cross,' was at 'Constantynoble;' and 'on in France, in the Kinges chapelle.'

Ver. 12586. 'The blood—in Hailes:' The Abbey of Hailes, in Gloucestershire, was founded by Richard, King of the Romans, brother to Henry III. This precious relic, which was afterwards commonly called 'the blood of Hailes' was brought out of Germany by the son of Richard, Edmund, who bestowed a third part of it upon his father's abbey of Hailes, and some time after gave the other two parts to an abbey of his own foundation at Ashrug, near Berkhamstead. (Hollinsh., v. ii. p. 275.)

Ver. 12590. 'The bicchel bones two:' The common reading is 'thilke bones.' The alteration which I have ventured to make is not authorised entirely by any MS., but in part by several. MS. A. reads 'biche^t;' C. 1, 'the becched;' HA. and H, 'the bicched;' C., B. *θ*., N. C., Ed. Ca. 1, 'the bicchid;' B. *α*, 'the bicche;' Ed. Ca. 2, 'the bitched.' 'Bickel,' as explained by Kilian, is 'Talus, ovillus et lusorius;' and 'Bickelen,' 'talīs ludere.' See also 'Had. Junii Nomencl.,' n. 213. Our dice, indeed, are the ancient 'tesseræ' (κυβοι), not 'tali' (ἀστραγαλοι); but both being games of hazard, the implements of one might be easily attributed to the other. It should seem from Junius (loc. cit.) that the Germans had preserved the custom of playing with the natural bones, as they have different names for a game with 'tali ovilli,' and another with 'tali bubuli.'

Ver. 12601. 'Go bet:' The same phrase is used in 'Leg. of G. W., Dido,' 288—

'The herd of hartes founden is anon,

With hey, go bet, pricke thou, let gon, let gon;'

where it seems to be a term of the chase.

Ver. 12885. 'Saint Helene;' Sir J. Mandeville (c. vii. p. 93): 'And nyghe that awtier is a place undre erthe, 42 degrees of depenesse, where the Holy Croys was founden, be the wytt of Seynte Elyne, undir a roche, where the Jewes had hidde it. And that was the veray croys assayed; for they founden 3 crosses; on of oure Lord and 2 of the 2 theves: and Seynte Elyne proved hem on a ded body, that aros from dethe to lyve, whan that it was leyd on it, that oure Lord dyed on.' (See also c. ii. p. 15.)

Ver. 12914. 'I smell a loller:' This is in character, as appears from a treatise of the time (Harl. Catal., n. 1666): 'Now in Engelond it is a comun protectioun ayens persecutioun—if a man is customable to swere nedeles and fals and unavised, by the bones, nailes, and sides and other membres of Crist.—And to absteyne fro othes nedeles and unleful,—and repreve sinne by way of charite, is mater and cause now, why Prelates and sum Lordes sclaudren men, and clepen hem Lollardes, Eretikes,' &c.

Ver. 12919. 'Said the Shipman:' So MS. B. δ , the *one* MS. (as I have said in the 'Discourse,' &c., § XXXI.) which countenances the giving of this prologue to the Shipman. In MSS. C. and D. this passage is given to the Sompnour, but not by way of prologue to his tale. In C. it is followed by the Wife of Bath's Prologue, and in D. by the Prologue which in this edition is prefixed to the Squire's Tale.

When these diversities are considered, and also that the whole passage is wanting in the five best MSS., it may perhaps appear not improbable that these twenty-eight lines, though composed by Chaucer, had not been inserted by him in the body of his work; that they were therefore omitted in the first copies, and were afterwards injudiciously prefixed to the Squire's Tale, when the true prologue of that tale, as printed above, was become unsuitable, by reason of the tale itself being removed out of its proper place.

Ver. 12923. 'Springen cockle:' This seems to shew that Chaucer considered 'Loller' as derived from 'lolium;' but Du Cange, in v. 'Lollardus,' rather supposes that 'Lollard' was a word of German original, signifying 'mussitator;' a 'mumbler' of prayers. (See also Kilian, in v. 'Lollaerd.')

Ver. 12942. 'He must us clothe:' In Ed. Ur. it is 'them;' but all the MSS. that I have seen read 'us:' which would lead one to suspect that this tale was originally intended for a female character.

Ver. 13000. 'Malvesie:' See the note on ver. 9681.

Ver. 13027. 'Under the yard:' This was properly said of children. MS. Bod., Jun. 66, 'Monachicum Colloquium,' Sax. Lat., p. 15:—

'Mag. *Quid manducas in die?*

Hwæt ytst thu on dæg?

'Dis. *Adhuc carnibus vescor,*

Gyt flæscmetum ic bruce,

quia puer sum

Fortham cild ic eom

sub virga *degens*.

under gyrda drohtniende.'

See before, ver. 7898.

Ver. 13061. 'On my Portos:' *i. e.*, Breviary. Du Cange, in v. 'Portiforium.' 'Portuasses' are mentioned among other prohibited books in the Stat. 3 and 4 E. VI., c. 10. And in the Parliament-roll of 7 E. IV., n. 40, there is a petition, that the robbing of 'Porteous, Grayell, Manuell,' &c., should be made felony without clergy; to which the King answered, 'Le Roy s'avisera.'

Ver. 13246. 'Haven her:' The final 'n' in 'haven' has been added for the sake of the metre; but unnecessarily, as the 'e' feminine may be pronounced before 'h,' as before a consonant. (See the note on ver. 300.)

Ver. 13368. 'A thousand last quad year:' 'Last,' in Teut., is 'onus,' 'sarcina' (Kilian); and 'quaed' in the same language is 'malus.' The meaning, therefore, is; 'God give the monke a thousand last (ever so great a weight) of quad yere (bad years, misfortune).' The Italians use 'mal anno' in the same sense.

Ver. 13383. 'O Lord, our Lord:' The Prioress begins her legend with the first verses of the 8th Psalm, 'Domine, Dominus noster,' &c.

Ver. 13401. 'When he thine hearte light:' *i. e.*, lighted; made light, or pleasant. So in 'Tro.,' b. iii. 1088:—

'Whan wroth is he that shold my sorrowes light.'

Ver. 13444. 'Saint Nicholas:' We have an account of the very early piety of this Saint in his Lesson, 'Brev. Roman.,' vi. Decemb.: 'Cujus viri sanctitas, quanta futura esset, jam ab incunabulis apparuit. Nam infans, cum reliquas dies lac nutricis frequens sugeret, quartâ et sextâ feriâ (on Wednesdays and Fridays) semel duntaxat, idque vesperi, sugebat.'

Ver. 13509. 'Souded in virginity:' or, according to the better MSS., 'souded to virginitee.' 'Souded' is from the Fr. 'souldé,'

and that from the Lat. 'solidatus;' consolidated, fastened together. In Wycliffe's 'N. T.,' Dedis. iii., 'consolidatæ' is rendered 'sowdid.' The latter part of this stanza refers to Rev. xiv. 3, 4.

Ver. 13575. 'I halse thee:' MSS. Ask. 1, 2, read, 'I conjure thee;' but that seems to be a gloss. 'To halse' signifies properly 'to embrace round the neck,' from the Sax. 'hals,' the neck. (See ver. 10253.) So in 'CL.,' ver. 1290:—

'I stand and speke and laugh and kisse and halse.'

It signifies also 'to salute' ('P. P.,' fol. xxii.):—

'I halse hym hendlich, as I hys frende were;'

and, fol. xxxix., 'to salute with reverence'—

'And the eleven sterres halsed him all;'

which seems to be the sense here.

Ver. 13597. 'Then will I fetchen thee:' The best MSS. read 'now,' which is scarce reconcilable to any rules of speech. Even with the correction which I have adopted, there is a greater confusion in this narration than I recollect to have observed in any other of Chaucer's stories.

END OF VOL. II.



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Chaucer, Geoffrey
Canterbury tales

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